Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/bookofthousandni0003epow

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT

© DINGWALL-ROCK, LD.

"The Tale of Kamaralzaman & Princess Budur"

The Book of

THE THOUSAND NIGHTS and ONE NIGHT

Rendered from the literal and complete version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus; and collated with other sources; by

E. POWYS MATHERS

Illustrations from drawings by

RODERICK MCRAE

VOLUME THREE

NEW YORK

DINGWALL-ROCK, LTD.

Copyright, 1929

New Edition, with Revisions

Copyright, 1930

Dingwall-Rock, Ltd.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

THE TALE OF KAMARALZAMAN AND THE PRINCESS BUDUR, MOON OF MOONS 1

THE TALE OF HAPPY-HANDSOME AND HAPPY-FAIR 100

THE TALE OF BEAUTY-SPOT 135

THE TALE OF SYMPATHY, THE LEARNED 205

AN ADVENTURE OF THE POET ABU NOWAS 245

THE TALE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR.... 254

containing

The First Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 258
The Second Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 270
The Third Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 280
The Fourth Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 293
The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 306
The Sixth Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 315

The Seventh and Last Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor 325

THE TALE OF ZUMURRUD, THE BEAUTIFUL, AND ALI SHAR, SON OF GLORY 340

THE TALE OF THE SIX DIFFERENT COLOURED GIRLS 391

THE TALE OF KAMARALZAMAN AND THE PRINCESS BUDUR, MOON OF MOONS

But When
The Hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come

Little Doniazade, who could not contain her impatience, rose from her carpet and said to Shahrazade:

"Sister, I pray you hasten to tell us the tale which you have promised; for its title alone has filled my heart with joy."

Shahrazade smiled at her sister, saying: "I wait the good pleasure of the King."

King Shahryar, who that night had hurried over his usual embrace because of his anxiety to hear the story, said: "O Shahrazade, you may begin the fairy tale which you have so agreeably announced."

So Shahrazade told the following tale:

It is related, O auspicious King, that there was once, in the antiquity of time, a sultan called Shahraman, master of armies and great wealth, who ruled over the land of Khalidan. Although he was in all other things happy, and possessed seventy concubines

and four wives, he suffered the grief of being childless; for he had already reached a great age, and the marrow had begun to dry within him without Allah having granted him an heir to the throne.

One day he confided his secret sorrow to his grand-wazir, saying: "I can find no reason for this torturing sterility." The wazir reflected for an hour before raising his head and answering: "The problem is a delicate one, soluble by none save Allah. I can only think of one remedy. Before you enter the women's quarter tonight, fulfil the duties of faith with unusual care, make your ablutions fervently, and pray to Allah with a submissive heart, so that your union may become fertile through His blessing."

"Master of wise words," cried Shahraman, "your remedy is an excellent one." He gave the wazir a robe of honour; and that evening chose the youngest of his women, a virgin, with remarkable hips, and lay with her after having meticulously performed his rites before the Creator. Thus it was that the woman conceived and bore a man-child in nine months to a day, amid the rejoicings of the people and the sound of fife, clarinet, and cymbal.

The child was so beautiful that his father marvelled and called his name Kamaralzaman, moon of the time.

As a child he was the most beautiful of created things; as a youth it was easy to be seen that beauty had scattered all the flowers of the garden upon his fifteen years; as he grew older his perfection increased in degree, remaining the same in kind, so that his eyes had all the magic of the eyes of the angels Harut and Marut and the seduction of the eyes of Taghut; and his cheeks were more pleasant to the regard than Spring anemones. His waist was more pliant than a bamboo, finer than a silken thread; but you would have

taken his croup for a mountain of moving sand; nightingales sang when they beheld it.

You must not be astonished then that his waist sometimes complained of the weight which went below it, and made mouths in its weariness at his behind.

Nevertheless his cheeks remained as fresh as the corol of roses, as pleasant as the evening breeze; so that all the poets of the time tried to paint his beauty. Here is one out of a thousand of the songs they sang:

Across his cheek with trailing flowers
The rose has written: "He is ours."
And the people cry: "Ah, ah!"

Crisped on his forehead nobly pale,
In each black tress the scorpion's tail
Has written: "If my venom fail . . ."
And the people cry: "Ah, ah!"

God wrote a new moon in the sky,
His silver nailparing; but I
(Who wait the full moon anxiously)
And the people cry: "Ah, ah!"

King Shahraman loved his son and could not bear to be separated from him. Fearing that he might dissipate his strength and beauty in excess, he wished to marry him during his lifetime and to rejoice in his posterity. One day, when this idea weighed on his mind, he opened his heart to his grand-wazir, who replied: "Marriage reduces the humours of the body and therefore your idea is excellent." The king sent for his son who came and, after wishing his father peace with all respect, stood silently before him with lowered eyes as a submissive son should always do.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come

She said.

Shahraman said to him: "My son, I wish to see you married during my lifetime, that I may rejoice in you and gladden my heart in your wedding." Kamaralzaman changed colour and answered: "My father, I have no inclination towards marriage and my heart feels no delight in women. Apart from the distaste I have for them, I have read so much in the books of the wise concerning the wickedness and perfidy of that sex that I would rather die than allow a woman to approach me. Our best poets have said on the subject:

She has overthrown
A thousand forts of steel and stone
Calling: "My own!"

Her eyes are black decoys,
Her hairs are hunting-nets for boys;
But she names them joys.

And again:

You ask me about women, I reply:
"Look at this wagging lip, this sunken eye,
The early white upon this scanty hair,
The rot of this strong body which was I."

And again:

Woman: that is to say
A body which the birds of prey
Disdain to take away.

Woman: the word implies
A thing which lies
With you at night, about you at sunrise.

Woman: and that will vouch
A common lodging and an open couch
Where the red roads of every man debouch.

Therefore, dear father, even at the risk of grieving you, I would not hesitate to kill myself if you wished to force me into marriage."

Though King Shahraman grieved at this answer and the light changed to darkness before his face, he so loved his son that he answered: "I do not wish to force you, Kamaralzaman, if the project is disagreeable to you. You are still young and will have time to reflect and to consider how happy I would be to see you married and the father of children."

For a whole year he spoke no more of marriage to Kamaralzaman; but loved him as before and coaxed him with presents.

At the end of the year he called his son to him, and said: "Have you reflected on the recommendation which I made to you and the joy which your marriage would give me?" Kamaralzaman bowed before his father, saying: "How could I have forgotten your words or have entertained the least thought of disobedience, seeing that Allah Himself commands my respect and submission in all that concerns my father? I have thought upon marriage for a whole year; and my reflections, fortified by the books of both ages which I have read, have convinced me that women are immoral, foolish, and disgusting, and that death were better than to have anything to do with them."

King Shahraman understood that it would be harm-

ful to constrain the obedience of his dear son; so he sorrowfully called his grand-wazir and said to him: "What fools fathers are when they desire children; for a son is a deception and a grief incarnate. Kamaralzaman is more set than ever against marriage; what must I do now?"

The wazir reflected a long time before answering: "O king of the age, have patience for another year and then instead of talking to your son in secret, assemble all your emirs and wazirs, your nobles and the officers of your palace, and in their full assembly declare your intention of marrying Kamaralzaman without delay. I warrant that in front of so many honourable people he will prove himself obedient enough."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come

She said:

The king witnessed his joy at this suggestion by giving his wazir a fair robe of honour. He waited for another year and then called his son before an assembly of all the chief people of the kingdom. The boy came in; was not the hall lighted? What beauty-spot upon his chin! What perfume, ya Allah, as he passed among the people! He kissed the earth three times between his father's hands and stood attentive. "My child," said the king, "I have brought you hither into the presence of all these honourable gentlemen

to tell you that I am about to marry you to some princess worthy of your blood, and to rejoice in your posterity before I die."

Kamaralzaman was stricken with a sort of lunacy which made him give so disrespectful an answer to his father that all who were present lowered their eyes in shame; and the king himself, not being able to pass over so public an insolence, cried in a terrible voice: "You shall see what happens to impudent and disobedient sons!" He ordered his guards to bind the boy's arms behind him and to shut him in an old ruined tower which was near the palace. This was done and one of the guards stayed at the door of the prison to watch over the prince and attend to him if he needed anything.

Kamaralzaman said sadly to himself: "Perhaps it would have been better to obey my father and consent to this marriage. At least I should have escaped being shut up in an old tower. It only proves that women are the cause of all misfortunes."

King Shahraman retired to his own apartments, mourning for the imprisonment of his dear son; he wept because he had already forgotten the boy's insolence and his heart was filled with fury against the wazir who had suggested the idea of the assembly. He sent for him and said: "You are to blame! If it had not been for you I should never have been betrayed into a position where I had to be harsh to my son. Speak now, if you have any excuse or suggestion to make; because I cannot bear that my son, my heart's desire, should undergo such punishment." "My king," answered the wazir, "leave the boy shut up for fifteen days and I guarantee that he will come out a most obedient son." "Are you sure?" asked the king; and the wazir answered: "I am sure." Shahraman

sighed and lay down on his bed, where he passed a sleepless night, for you must know that his only son was the greatest joy in his life; he was accustomed to sleep with the lad at his side, making a pillow for him with his arm and watching over his slumbers. Therefore that night he turned from side to side without closing his eyes.

An excellent bed had been spread for the prince in the place of his confinement; when night fell, the slave at the door entered with a lighted torch, which he placed at the foot of the couch and retired. Then Kamaralzaman made his ablutions, recited certain chapters of the Koran, and undressed himself till he was clothed in nothing but a light shirt. He passed a piece of blue silk round his brow and thus became as beautiful as the moon upon her fourteenth night. He lay down upon the bed and, although he was sorrowful at having displeased his father, soon fell into a sound sleep.

He did not know (how could he even have dreamed?) what was going to happen to him that night in an old tower, haunted by Jinn of the earth and air.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

The tower in which Kamaralzaman was shut dated back to the time of the ancient Romans and had been abandoned for a great many years; at the back of it

was a well in which lived a young Ifrita of the seed of Eblis, whose name was Maymuna. She was the daughter of Dumiryat, king of the subterranean Jinn; a Believer, famed throughout all the unknown spaces for her power and her virtue.

Towards midnight Maymuna left the well to take the air, as was her custom, and flew up towards the higher levels of the sky that she might the more easily start thence for whatsoever place she desired to visit. As she went by the top of the tower, she was astonished to see a light in a place which had been so long neglected. She said to herself: "There must be some reason for this light; I will go and see." Swerving in her flight, she entered the tower and passed over the sleeping body of the guard into Kamaralzaman's chamber. Words cannot describe her joyful surprise on seeing the youth stretched out half naked upon the couch. She paused on tip-toe, lowered her wings which were inconvenient in so narrow a space, and gently approached the bed. She lifted the covering from the boy's face and was thunderstruck at his excess of beauty. For a full hour she held her breath, lest she should wake him before she had had time to learn his perfections by heart. In all her ages of existence she had never seen cheeks so delicately touched with red, eyelids with such long cool shadows, or such assembly of lights as there was upon that perfumed body. She might have made use of the words of the poet:

Dark grow the eyes of folly in my head,
The white flowers in my garden turn to red;

As the three Nights before this occupied only a few lines in the Arabic text, Mardrus suppressed them in order that the narrative should not be unnecessarily interrupted. Such omissions in the future will not be noted.—E.P.M.

I cry to the respectable and wise:
"Then try to find some rapture in its stead."

Maymuna's eyes filled with tears; she praised Allah, crying: "Blessed be the Creator of such perfection!" Then she thought to herself: "How can the mother and father of this boy bear to be separated from him, or be so cruel as to shut him in this tower? Do they not know the wicked practices of the ruin-haunting Jinn? As Allah lives, if they have no concern for their child, I will take him under my protection and guard him from any Jinni who would abuse his loveliness." After this oath, she bent over Kamaralzaman and kissed him very gently on the lips, the eyelids, and the cheeks; then covered him again without waking him, and flew through the highest window.

She reached the middle region of the air and was refreshing herself with calm flight as she thought of the sleeping youth, when she heard a furious beating of wings. Turning towards the sound, she recognised the Ifrit Dahnash, a lewd Jinni, who did not believe in the supremacy of Sulayman, son of David. He was the son of Shamhurish, swiftest flier of the Jinn.

Maymuna was afraid this base Dahnash might see the light in the tower and perpetrate some nameless thing, so she swooped down upon him like a sparrow-hawk and was about to dash him to the ground, when he made a sign of surrender, crying: "O Maymuna, O daughter of the king, I conjure you by the name of the Sacred Seal of Sulayman not to harm me. I promise on my part that I will do nothing shocking." "Be it so," answered Maymuna, "I will spare you, if you tell me whence you come so late and what you are thinking of doing. Only speak the truth, O Dahnash, or I will tear out your wing feathers, scorch your skin,

and break your bones. A lie will not help you, O Dahnash." Then said the Ifrit: "O mistress, you have met me at the right moment for hearing something very strange. But first promise me that I may go in peace after I have satisfied your curiosity, and that you will give me a safe-conduct serviceable against my foes of earth, air, and sea, O powerful daughter of Dumiryat."

Maymuna made answer: "I promise upon the engraven stone in the ring of Sulayman, son of David (prayer and peace be upon both of them!). Now speak!"

The Ifrit Dahnash slackened his speed and ranged himself alongside Maymuna. Then he told her this adventure:

"Glorious Maymuna, I have just come from the last back of the furthest beyond, a land behind the confines of China, where rules Ghayur the Great. He has below his powers many remarkable towers, from each of which lowers a company of soldiers each greater than any army of ours; his women are fairer than flowers after showers; and even my flight, which devours a thousand leagues in as many hours, has never before beheld anything to be compared with his only daughter the lady Budur.

"My tongue would become fury before it could paint you the whole beauty of this princess; if you will listen, I will try to give you the pale shadow of the truth of certain details.

"I will tell you of her hair, of her cheeks, of her mouth, of her breasts, of her hands, of her croup, of her eyes and of her thighs and of her feet."

"In the name of Allah!"

"Her hair is dark as the separation of friends; she let it fall in three rivers to her feet, and I

thought I looked upon three nights at the same time.

"Her face is as white as the day when lost friends meet again. The moon shone on it; or, maybe, it shone upon the moon.

"Her cheeks are an anemone, parted into two petals; her nose is a sword; there is purple wine running cool below the crystal of her skin.

"Her lips are coloured agate, eloquent with a water which cures all thirst.

"Blessed be Allah who made her breasts twin fruit of ivory, each fitted for the grasp of a lover's hand.

"Her hand has dimples of shadow, as cunningly placed as are the Arabic characters in the life work of a Coptic scribe.

"Her croup; oh, oh, I shiver and I recollect. It is so heavy that it makes her sit down when she would rise, and rise when she would lie down. A poet has said:

Her sumptuous figure calls for a less frail
  Waist than is common,
    Whereas her waist is frailer:
Therefore when she would rise and take regale
  Among her women
    Her slim white ankles fail her . . .
Here is a beauty that I fain would gaol
  Being but human,
    If my heart were the gaoler.

"Such is her croup; her thighs are two branches of marble marrying in the air. I wonder that her feet, though beautiful, can bear such beauty.

"As for the graceful lines and contours: tongue can but say that one is All, and the other Absolute; gesture is dumb before them.

"Such is the lady Budur, daughter of Ghayur, O my princess."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

"I must tell you that King Ghayur so loves his daughter that his only pleasure in life is to find some new amusement for her. Recently when he had exhausted other kinds of joys, he had a series of seven miraculous palaces built for her, each of a different material. The first is entirely of crystal, the second of diaphanous alabaster, the third of porcelain, the fourth of stone mosaic, the fifth of silver, the sixth of gold, and the seventh of diamonds. Each is wonderfully furnished according to the style of its building, so that a day therein may be a dream; and is completed with gardens and waterfalls.

"In order to please his daughter, the king caused her to live but a single year in each palace, that she should never grow tired and that pleasure should succeed to pleasure.

"I saw the child among the beauty of her palaces: do you wonder that I have lost my head?

"All the kings about have sought this magnificently-behinded maiden in marriage; but when her father has told her of these proposals, she has answered: 'I am queen and mistress of myself. How shall my body which can hardly bear the touch of silks, tolerate the

rough approaches of a man?' So the king, who would rather die than discontent his daughter, has been obliged to send her suitors away. Once, when a young king, more powerful and handsome than the rest, sent gifts and proposed for the hand of Budur, she broke out in reproaches against her father, crying: 'I see but one way to rid myself of these continuous tortures: to take this sword and plunge it in my body so that it comes out at my back.' She even set about committing this violence upon herself, so that the king rolled the whites of his eyes in fear and confided his child to the keeping of ten wise old women, including her own nurse: and since then one at least of them has never left her, even sleeping at the door of her chamber.

"That is the state of affairs at present, Mistress Maymuna. I go every night to open my heart with the contemplation of her beauties, nor is temptation lacking to clasp her and rejoice in her unparalleled beauty; but I refrain, thinking shame to attempt such loveliness. I content myself most discreetly while she sleeps; I kiss her between the eyes very gently, though I am burning to press my lips strongly upon her. I do not do so, because I distrust myself; I would rather abstain altogether than find that I had harmed her.

"Come with me, Maymuna, and see this paragon; I warrant that her perfections will amaze you!"

Thus spoke the Ifrit Dahnash, son of swift Shamhurish.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come

She said:

Young Maymuna heard his words without replying; when he had finished she burst into a mocking laugh, dug him in the belly with her wing, and spat in his face, saying: "Your remarks about this young pisser are all very disgusting. I ask myself how you dare to speak of her in the same breath as the handsome youth I love." Wiping his face, the Ifrit answered: "Dear mistress, I was absolutely ignorant of the existence of your young friend; and, although I ask your pardon, I will have to see him with my own eyes before I can believe that he rivals the beauty of my princess." "Will you be quiet, evil one?" cried Maymuna. "My friend is so handsome that, if you saw him even in one of your dreams, you would fall into an epilepsy and bubble like a camel." "But who and where is he?" asked Dahnash; and the Ifrita answered: "O beast, he is in the same trouble as your princess, and is shut in the old tower behind which I live; but, if you think you are going to see him without me, disabuse yourself, because I know how wicked you are and would not even trust you to stand guard over the dreams of a holy man. I will show him to you myself, as I want your opinion; but I warn you that if you dare to lie and defy the truth of your own vision, I will tear out your eyes and make you the most miserable of Ifrits. At the same time, I shall expect you to pay a large forfeit if my friend is fairer than your princess, and shall be prepared to do the same myself if the positions are

reversed." "I accept!" cried Dahnash. "Come with me to see the lady, Budur." "But," Maymuna objected, "it will be quicker to go to the tower which is just below our feet, and afterwards we can compare." So the two dropped down until they came to the top of the tower, and then entered the chamber of Kamaralzaman by the window.

"Do not move, and above all behave yourself," said Maymuna to Dahnash, as she went up to the sleeping boy and removed his covering. Then she turned her head, and continued: "Look, O evil one, and be careful not to fall on the floor in your emotion." Dahnash turned his head and then jerked it away in stupefaction; he looked a second time long and long. "Mistress Maymuna," he said at last, shaking his head, "I find that it was excusable in you to think your friend incomparable; for I have never seen so many perfections in a boy, and I think I may claim to know something about them; and yet I tell you this, the mould which made him was not broken until it had cast a female copy also, Princess Budur, daughter of Ghayur."

Hearing these words, Maymuna threw herself upon Dahnash and gave him so violent a blow with her wing about the head that one of his horns was broken. "Vilest of Ifrits," she cried, "I command you to go at once to the palace of this Budur and bring her back with you; I will not put myself out for the silly little thing. When you return we can compare the two; go quickly or I will cut your flesh into strips and throw them to the hyenas and the crows." Dahnash picked up his horn and made off, grumbling and scratching his bottom. He plunged through the air like a javelin and returned in an hour with his burden.

The sleeping Princess lay upon the shoulders of

Dahnash, clothed solely in her chemise: and her body glimmered whitely beneath it. Worked in gold thread and many coloured silks on the wide sleeves of this chemise, were to be read these verses in interlacing character:

Three things alone
Prevent her black eyes saying yes:
Fear of the unknown and horror of the known
And her own loveliness.

"I think that you have been amusing yourself with this young girl by the way," said Maymuna to Dahnash, "it should not take an hour for a good Ifrit to go and come between Khalidan and China. But be that as it may, hasten to place the little one by the side of my friend that we may make our examination." So Dahnash, with infinite precaution, laid the Princess on the bed and took off her chemise.

The child was as beautiful as Dahnash had painted her and Maymuna was forced to admit that the two upon the couch might be twins, save in the matter of some minor details. Each had the same moonlit face, the same slim waist, and the same rich round loveliness; if the one lacked some slight quality of perfection that the other possessed, it was well nigh impossible to detect it.

Maymuna said to Dahnash: "I admit that it was possible to hestitate between the two, but you must be a fool or blind not to know that, if there is equality between a male and a female, the male bears off the prize." But Dahnash answered: "I know what I know, and I see what I see; nor will time make me deny the witness of my senses. Nevertheless I am ready to tell a lie if that would please you."

Maymuna broke out into angry laughter and, recognising that she and the foolish Dahnash would never agree through a simple examination, she said: "Let us decide which of us is right by putting the matter to the arbitrament of our inspiration. Let each of us prove our contention by saying beautiful verses in praise of our favourites. Do you consent; or are you incapable of a subtlety which is usually only found among refined people?" "I was about to propose the same thing myself," replied Dahnash. "My father, Shamhurish, taught me the rules of poetic construction and the art of rhythmical verses. You begin, charming Maymuna."

The Ifrita bent over the lips of Kamaralzaman and kissed them lightly; then, with her hand among his hair, she said:

This body is born of branches
And the scent of jasmin:
No woman was made so.

Night threw a handful of stars
Into black tarns:
No woman was made so.

To drink the aromatic honey of his mouth,
To feed my flesh on his, to feel his hair . . .
No woman was made so.

Dahnash ecstatically applauded these lines, convulsing himself with emotion at their beauty; then he approached Budur and, inspiring himself by kissing her breasts, sang:

The myrtles of Damascus smile and shine
And lift my heart like wine,
But you . . .

The roses of Baghdad are fed on dew
And moonlight. Oh, but you,
If you were mine . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

When Maymuna heard this delicious little poem, she was surprised that so much talent could be concealed by so much ugliness; and as she had a certain amount of judgment, although she was a woman, complimented Dahnash who swelled with delight. Then she said: "Although you have a delicate soul under your strange exterior, you must not think that you excel in verse or that Budur excels in beauty." "Is that so!" cried Dahnash. "Yes, it is," she answered. "I do not believe you," he replied; and she said: "Take that!" and poked him in the eye with her wing. "That is not proof!" he howled. "Look at my charm!" she screamed. "It is little enough," he retorted.

Maymuna wished to throw herself upon Dahnash and do him some real injury, but in the twinkling of an eye he changed himself into a flea and hid below the two forms on the bed. The Ifrita was therefore obliged to swear a truce, so that Dahnash warily returned to his own form. "Listen, good Dahnash," said Maymuna, "there is only one way to end our dispute, and that is to refer it to a third party."

Dahnash was willing; so Maymuna stamped upon

the flooring, which opened and emitted an Ifrit of woeful ugliness. On his head were six horns, each four thousand four hundred and eighty cubits in length, and he had three forked tails which were not an inch shorter; he was hump-backed and lame, and his eyes were where his nose should have been; one of his arms was five thousand five hundred and fifty-five cubits long, and the other only half a cubit; his hands were greater than cauldrons, with claws like a lion's; he had hoofs which made him limp; and his tail, which was forty times larger than that of an elephant, ran between his legs and rose triumphantly behind him. His name was Kashkash bin Fakrash bin Atrash, of the line of Abu Hanfash.

When the floor closed, Kashkash kissed the earth between Maymuna's hands and, standing humbly before her with crossed arms, said: "Mistress Maymuna, daughter of our king, your slave awaits your bidding." "I wish you, good Kashkash," she said, "to judge between myself and the wicked Dahnash. The matter is such and such. Cast an impartial eye upon this bed and say whether the youth or the maiden is more beautiful."

Kashkash regarded the two young people sleeping, calm and naked, on the bed; and was seized with such an emotion that he grasped his hairs above his head with his left hand, and, holding his triple tail with his right, danced about the chamber. At last he said to the other two: "As Allah lives, they are equal in beauty and their difference is one of sex alone. I know only one way of settling your dispute."

"What is that?" cried they; but he replied: "First let me sing something in honour of this most disturbing girl." "There is not time," said Maymuna, "except perhaps for some song about the youth." "That

would be a little irregular," objected Kashkash. "Sing what you like then," retorted Maymuna, "as long as the lines are short and well-balanced." Thereupon Kashkash sang this obscure and complicated song:

The prudent lover slips,
Dear lad, from out that kind
Of love which asks for constancy.
Behave like me:
Drink sugar as it drips,
But keep in mind
That salt were sweeter on less easy lips.

"I cannot be bothered to understand you," said Maymuna, "hasten to tell us how we know the truth." "It is quite simple," answered Kashkash, "wake one after the other, while we three remain invisible, and the one who shows greater love and hotter passion for the other, will prove himself or herself vanquished in the test, by confessing that the charms of the other are more powerful."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

Maymuna cried: "O excellent idea!" and Dahnash, exclaiming: "The idea is excellent!" changed himself again into a flea, and bit the handsome Kamaralzaman in the neck. The youth woke with a start and carried his hand to the place; but he found nothing,

for Dahnash, after having avenged the affronts of Maymuna on the youth's white skin, had returned to his own invisible form.

What happened after this was certainly remarkable.

Kamaralzaman, who was still half asleep, dropped his hand from his neck and it came to rest on Budur's naked thigh. The boy opened his eyes and then shut them again, for they were dazzled. He felt against him a body more tender than butter and breathed another's breath sweeter than musk. In pleased surprise he raised his head and looked long at the unknown sleeper by his side.

Leaning on his elbow, all unmindful of his hatred, he detailed with charmed eyes the girl's perfections. First he compared her to a fair citadel topped by a dome, then to a pearl, then to a rose; he could not at first make a true comparison as he was ignorant of the forms and graces of women; but soon he realised that his last analogy was the truest, his second the pleasantest, and his first ridiculous.

He leaned over the rose, inhaling the perfume of its delicious flesh, passing his nose over the whole of its surface. This he found so pleasant that he ventured his fingers over all the contours of the pearl and found that this touch set his body on fire, causing movement and beatings in various parts of his person. He felt a violent need to give rein to his nature; so crying: "Be it as Allah wills!" he made ready to make love to Budur.

Suddenly it occurred to Kamaralzaman that it was very astonishing that the girl should have on no chemise. He arose and looked about the room for the discarded garment. But Dahnash had concealed it for sport. He was puzzled at this grave breach of etiquette on the part of one whose face and form were

indeed noble. He then cried: "As Allah lives I must wake her up; it is strange that she is not awake already."

Now it was Dahnash who had plunged the girl into a deep slumber in order that Kamaralzaman might go to work the more easily.

The boy set his lips to the lips of the princess and took a long kiss; but still she did not wake. He took a second, and a third, without result; and at last spoke to her, saying: "Rise up, my heart, my eye! Awake, O liver of me, for I am Kamaralzaman." But the young girl did not move. So the Prince stretched himself upon her, saying: "As Allah lives, I must awake her."

Maymuna, Dahnash and Kashkash were watching all this while; and the first was getting ready to say, in case the boy achieved his deed, that it did not count.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

The girl was sleeping on her back, dressed only in her dishevelled hair; the Prince clasped his arms about her, and would have kissed her, when suddenly he shivered and disengaged himself, saying: "Surely my father has placed this girl in my bed and now watches through some hole in the wall. Tomorrow he will say: 'Kamaralzaman, you pretend to abominate women; what then did you do to that girl last night? You delight to caress in secret; but refuse

marriage to thwart me of my joy in your posterity.' And I shall be considered a liar and trickster. Therefore tonight I shall refrain, although I do not wish to; and tomorrow I shall ask my father to give me this fairest of all girls in marriage. He will be happy, and I shall be able to use this alluring form without repenting of it."

With that, to Maymuna's great delight and to the powerful disappointment of Dahnash, who was already dancing with joy, Kamaralzaman kissed Budur upon the lips, slipped a costly diamond ring from one of his fingers on to one of hers to show that he considered her his wife already, and then regretfully turned his back and went to sleep.

After this Maymuna changed herself into a flea, and, leaping with agility into the bed, jumped on Budur's soft flesh, hopping about to find a tender spot that was suitable for her purpose. Finally she found one, and concentrating her jealousy and revenge in a single bite, she caused the young girl to spring up wide awake, carrying both her hands to the seat of her pain. The Princess gave a cry of terror and astonishment when she saw a young man lying beside her, but her first glance changed into a second of admiration, her second into a third of joy, her third into a fourth of delirium.

In her first fright she thought: "You are compromised for ever, for there is a young stranger in your bed. For his audacity, the eunuchs shall cast him from the window into the river! . . . and yet, perhaps this is some youth which my father has chosen for me: let me look at him before I have recourse to violence." Thus it was that she took her second glance and was overcome by his beauty. "O my heart, how pretty he is!" she whispered. Bending

over his lips which smiled with sleep, she kissed him, saying to herself: "As Allah lives I wish him for my husband. Why has my father delayed so long in giving him to me?" She took one of his hands within her own, and said quietly: "Wake, wake, delightful friend; arise, son of my soul; come kiss me, my dear; come kiss me, my life; awake, awake!"

But Kamaralzaman was kept in a deep sleep by Maymuna, and therefore did not move; so that the beautiful Princess thought that the fault lay with her, and that she had not put enough warmth into her appeal. Without caring whether any watched or no, she besought the young man with every guile that she could command, whispering, the while, the sweetest of invitations in his ear. But kisses, embraces, sweet spoken commandments were of no avail. Kamaralzaman slept as one who has eaten benj and waked not. Then she importuned him, saying: "Awake beloved husband of my heart, awake! I will be sweet and obedient, your humblest slave. Lo, I shall give you every refinement of love. Nor day nor night shall be long enough for all our tender happiness." But the young man, being enchanted, awoke not nor made even a stirring sign of recognition.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

Then, as Kamaralzaman still slept, the Princess thought that it was a trick of his, and, half laughing, she said: "Come, come, dear friend, do not play with me like this. Is it so that my father has taught you to

punish my pride? But now it is enough, because your beauty, O fawn, has turned me into a faithful slave of love."

The Prince still remained motionless and the lady Budur, more and more in love, exclaimed: "Open your eyes, O master of beauty. I also am considered beautiful; all life about me lives in an admiration of my cold, serene perfection. You alone have lighted a fire within me; why will you not wake, adorable boy, why will you not wake? I feel that I am dying."

With that she cast discretion to the winds and laid aside her pleadings for more forthright and pleasurable pursuits. Even as desire is greater in woman so is their intelligence quicker to seize upon new situations, and that they are more practical is well attested. The lady Budur was suffocating with her pent-up emotions, her amorous longing was as intense as great pain. She shook the sleeping Kamaralzaman vigorously, she pulled his hair, tweaked his ear, pinched him, digging her pointed nails into his flesh, but he awoke not. She was puzzled, vexed, even enraged at this careless disregard for her, this impertinent sleeping. She recalled the adage: "A sleeping lover is a better companion of the night, my child, than the lonely thoughts of singleness." The saying which concerns the Prophet and the mountain came to her mind and she accepted it as an omen.

Afterwards, the lady Budur kissed the palms of her sleeping lover's hands, and, pillowing his head upon her breast, fell into a smiling sleep.

The three Ifrits had lost not a single gesture of all this; and Maymuna was delighted to have proved to Dahnash that he had lost his wager. Nevertheless she was magnanimous, saying: "I let you off your debt, O evil one; also I grant you the safe conduct which

you require about the airy ways. Do not abuse it and try always to behave well."

Then, turning towards Kashkash, she said sweetly: "I thank you for your advice, and name you chief of my messengers. My father, Dumiryat, shall confirm my choice. . . . Now both of you take this girl back to the palace of her father; for her development has been so swift before my eyes, that I make her my friend and prophesy fair things for her in the future."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

The two Ifrits approached the bed, and, taking the girl up on their shoulders, flew with her to the palace of King Ghayur and deposited her gently on her couch. Then they went off in different directions.

Maymuna, after kissing her young friend on the eyes, returned to her well.

In the morning Kamaralzaman awoke with his mind filled by the adventure of the night. He turned to right and left, seeking his bride and, when he did not find her, said to himself: "This is some trick of my father's to prove me, and hurry me on to marriage. Therefore I did well to wait for his consent like a good son, before accomplishing my desires." He called to the slave at the door: "Rouse up, you rascal!" and the fellow staggered in, half asleep, carrying the ewer and the basin for his master. The Prince took them

and went to the privy, where he did what he needed, and then performed careful ablutions. Returning to his room, he prayed and ate a morsel, before sitting down to read a chapter of the Koran. When he had finished, he said to the slave in an indifferent voice: "Whither have you taken the young girl, O Sawab?" "What young girl, my master?" asked the astonished slave; and Kamaralzaman raised his voice, crying: "Give me a straight answer, you scamp! Where is the young girl who passed the night upon my bed?" "As Allah lives, I have seen no young girl," exclaimed the slave. "No one could have entered, for I was sleeping across the door." "Eunuch of misfortune," cried the Prince, "do you also thwart me and heat the humours of my blood? I see that they have instructed you to lie; but I command you to speak the truth." The slave lifted his arms to heaven, crying: "Allah alone is great! I do not understand anything of what you are saying, my master."

"Come here, you wretch!" shouted Kamaralzaman, and when the eunuch approached he threw him to the floor and heaped blows upon him till he broke wind. When the blackamoor was half dead and answered the Prince's questions with inarticulate cries, the latter fetched a stout hempen rope which was used for the well and, passing it under the slave's arms, let him down into the water.

It was winter, the water was unpleasant and the air cold; so that the eunuch began to sneeze violently, howling for pardon. But the Prince dipped him up and down several times, crying: "You shall not come out until you tell me the truth." "Surely he will do what he says," thought the eunuch; and he called aloud: "Pull me up, and I will tell you the truth, O Prince." Kamaralzaman hoisted him to the

surface, and he stood there shivering like a reed in the wind, with chattering teeth and bleeding nose. Feeling himself for the moment out of danger, he obtained leave of his persecutor to change his clothes and staunch the blood; but, instead of doing so, he ran to the palace and found the king.

At this moment Shahraman was saying to his wazir: "I have passed a bad night, for my heart was heavy lest so tender a youth as my son might have come to harm in the old tower." The wazir answered: "I assure you that no harm has come to him; he is better where he is, if you have any wish to tame his pride."

Even as he was speaking the eunuch fell at the king's feet, crying: "O our master the sultan, misfortune has come into your house! My young lord woke this morning in a state of madness. As a proof, he said such and such and did to me such and such. Now I swear by Allah that I never saw any young girl."

When he heard this, King Shahraman supposed that his fears were realised and cried to the wazir: "A curse be upon you, O wazir of dogs; it was you who suggested I should shut up my son, the light of my heart! Rise up now, see what has happened, and immediately bring me word."

The wazir made all haste to the tower, asking questions of the eunuch by the way. His replies were so disquieting that the old man entered the room with boundless precaution; first his head, and then his body, bit by bit. You may picture his surprise when he saw Kamaralzaman sitting calmly on his bed and reading the Koran with reverent attention.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

The wazir went up to the bed and sat down on the floor beside it, saying: "This pitch-black eunuch has put us all in a great fright. Would you believe that he ran to us like some scabby dog and frightened us all with news so indecent that I would not repeat it before you. I am still all of a tremble through his false reports." "Indeed," replied Kamaralzaman, "he cannot have been more of a nuisance to you than he was to me. I should be interested to hear what he said." "Allah preserve your youth!" the wazir answered, "Allah strengthen your understanding! Allah preserve you from heedless acts and from words which have no salt to them! This son of a bitch said that you had suddenly gone mad, that you spoke of a girl who had lain by you all the night, that you had beaten him and thrown him into the well. Oh, what insolence from a putrescent black man!"

Kamaralzaman smiled knowingly and answered: "Have you not had enough of this joke, you dirty old man; or do you want to visit my new hammam at the bottom of the well? I warn you that, if you do not tell me at once where my father has hidden my divine, my rose-cheeked, black-eyed mistress, I will treat you worse than I treated the eunuch."

The wazir recoiled in fear, saying: "May the name of Allah be upon you and about you! Why do you speak in this way, O Kamaralzaman? If it is some dream that you have had through indigestion, clear

your mind of it, I pray; for these are not the remarks of a sane man."

"Sinister old man," cried the Prince, "I did not see her with my ears, but with these two eyes; I did not touch or smell the roses of her body with my eyes, but with these fingers and this nose. So take that!" He butted the wazir in the belly with his head, so that the old man fell over; then, getting a good grip on his long white beard, he beat him until his own strength failed.

The unhappy wazir, feeling his beard giving way hair by hair and his soul slipping away from him bit by bit, thought to himself: "Now I had better lie myself out of the hands of this young maniac." Aloud he said: "Master, I beg your pardon for having deceived you; only your father forbade me, on pain of being hanged instantly, to reveal the place where he has concealed the girl. If you will let me go, I will run to him and beg him to release you from this place, and marry you to the child: surely he will rejoice in doing so!"

Kamaralzaman let go, saying: "Run now, and return immediately with my father's answer." The wazir incontinently leapt from the room, double-locking the door behind him, and hurried, clothed as he was in indignation and torn garments, to the throne-room of the king.

Shahraman looked at him and said: "I see you ill-treated and without your turban. Some terrible thing must have happened to you."

"A more terrible thing has happened to your son," answered the wazir, "for he has gone quite mad, past peradventure."

The king saw the light change to darkness before his eyes and said: "Allah help me! In what way is

my child mad?" The wazir told him; and the king at once flamed out into a great anger, crying: "O pestilence among wazirs, this news shall cost you your head! If my son is as you say, I shall crucify you on the highest minaret in the city, to teach you what advice it is meet to give and what to leave ungiven." With that he ran to the tower and entered the chamber of Kamaralzaman with the wazir at his heels.

The young prince rose in honour of his father and stood before him with folded arms, after having kissed his hands as a good son should. The king, delighted to see him so calm and, throwing an arm about his neck, kissed him between the eyes with tears of joy. Then he made the youth sit beside him on the bed, and, turning with wrath to the wazir, exclaimed: "Now you can see for yourself that you are the last of the very last of wazirs. How dared you tell me that my son was such and such, making my heart afraid and crushing my liver to fragments? Now you shall hear with your own ears the most sane replies of my dear son." He looked at Kamaralzaman paternally, and asked:

"My child, what day of the week is today?" "It is Saturday," answered the other. "You hear that?" cried the king, with a terrible glance of triumph at the wazir; then he continued:

"And what day will tomorrow be; can you tell me that, O Kamaralzaman?" "Indeed, I can," replied the prince, "tomorrow will be Sunday; and the next day Monday, the next Tuesday, the next Wednesday, the next Thursday, and the next Friday, which is a holy day."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

The delighted king cried: "Heaven defend you from all evil, my son! Now tell me, in good Arabic, in what month we are?" The young man answered: "This is Zul-Kadah. It will be followed by Zulhijjah, that by Muharram, that by Safar, that by Rabia the First, that by Rabia the Second, then come the two Jamadas, and after Rajab, Shaban, Ramazan and Shawwal."

The king in his relief and joy spat in the wazir's face, saying: "You are the only madman here, detestable old man." The wazir shook his head and answered nothing, considering that this was not the end.

Then said the king to his son: "My child, if you will believe it, this wazir and this pitch-black eunuch came and reported such and such of you, and that you had said a girl had been with you in the night. Tell them to their faces that they lie!"

"Father," said Kamaralzaman with a bitter smile, "I cannot enjoy this joke any more. I pray you spare me any further humiliation, for I feel the humours of my body changed with what you have already made me endure. I have determined to obey you, and I willingly consent to marry the lovely woman whom you sent to my bed last night. My blood boils with her still; I find her admirable."

At these words of his son the king cried: "May the name of Allah be upon you and about you, my child! May he preserve you from the evil of madness! What nightmare is this? Did you eat so heavily yesterday

that the consequent dreams have played havoc with your wits? Return to your right senses, my child; I shall never go against your wishes again. Accursed alike be marriage and the hour of marriage, and any who dare in the future to talk of marriage!"

Kamaralzaman answered: "Your words are before my eyes, O father. But first swear to me, I pray you, that you know nothing of the adventure of this night; for I can prove to you that it has left traces." "I swear by the truth of the sacred name of Allah, God of Moses and Abraham, who sent Muhamad among His creatures to be a promise to them of Peace Amen!" cried the king; and Kamaralzaman repeated: "Amen!" Then he said to his father:

"If someone came to you, saying: 'Last night I woke and saw before me a form about to wrestle with me till the blood came and, although I did not wish to fight with the figure, an unconscious movement of my sword took it in the middle of its naked belly, so that this morning my blade still bore traces of the combat,' and proved their statement by showing you unmistakable signs, what would you say, my father?" "I would say," answered the king, "that the signs without the body of the victim were but half a proof."

Then said Kamaralzaman: "My father, when I woke this morning I found a portent which no man can possibly doubt. You will find my blue silken shirt in the closet, my father. Look upon it and draw your own conclusions. As further witness, here is the girl's ring which I found upon my finger. Mine has disappeared."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Come

She said:

The King hurried to the privy and, seeing that the basin of his son's ablutions held a great quantity of blood, said to himself: "I think that the victim of that duel must have been very healthy; it is a royal wound. I see the hand of my wazir in this." He returned to his son and, taking the ring from him, turned it over and over for a long time before he returned it to him, and said: "This is a proof that troubles me." He remained silent for a whole hour, before he cried to the wazir: "Old bawd, you have arranged this mystification!" But the wazir fell at his feet, swearing by the Holy Book and by the Faith that he knew nothing of the business; and the eunuch swore to his ignorance with the same oaths.

"Allah alone can solve this mystery," said the perplexed king to his son; but the other answered in a trembling voice: "I beg you to hunt out this girl for me, for my soul cannot forget her. Have compassion upon me and find her, or I shall die." The king wept and answered: "O Kamaralzaman, only Allah is great, only He can know that which is not known. There is nothing left for us but to mourn together; you for a hopeless love, and I because I am powerless to cure your pain."

The king led his son out of the tower by the hand and returned with him to the palace, where he refused to pay attention to the affairs of the kingdom; but mourned instead by the bed on which Kamaralzaman lay despairing for his lost and unknown mistress.

In order that he might remove himself further from

the people and concerns of the court and might occupy himself with nothing but the care of his dear son, he had a palace built in the midst of the sea, joined only to the mainland by a pier twenty cubits wide. There they lived together alone, far from all noise, dreaming of their misfortune. Kamaralzaman found no consolation save in reading romances about love and reciting the verses of inspired poets. This was one out of a thousand:

Brave child, who wins
Each skirmish in the battle of the roses,
Your loot lies purple on your brow;
And one supposes
The captives of the garden now,
The vanquished each and all,
Lean down to kiss your feet, as small
And sweet as sins.

O princess maid,
The winds of evening get their sweet
By kissing your two feet.
We have lost many a summer breeze
Which ventured underneath your light chemise
And stayed.

O little queen,
The necklace of your naked throat has felt
Wantonly jealous of your belt: . . .
The golden bracelets of your either wrist
Are envious of your anklets, which have kissed
And seen what they have seen.

The night was already far spent when the two Ifrits had placed the lady Budur on her bed, so that in three hours morning came and she woke. She smiled and

stretched herself in that delicious waking by a lover's side. While her eyes were still shut, she put forth her arms to him, and clasped the empty air. Then she became wide awake on the instant and her heart and mind were so troubled by the disappearance of the youth that she uttered a great cry, which brought her nurse and the nine other old women running to her side. "What is it, my mistress?" cried the frightened nurse.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come

She said:

Budur cried out: "You ask me as if you did not know, O cunning one! Tell me at once what has become of the sweet young man who lay in my arms all night; for I love him passionately." The scandalised old woman thrust out her neck to hear better, and said: "Allah preserve you from all improper matters, O princess! This is not your usual kind of conversation; if it is a joke, please tell me." Budur half rose on her bed and answered in a threatening voice: "Nurse of misfortune, I order you; tell me what has become of that youth to whom last night I gave my body, my heart, and my virginity."

The nurse saw the world diminishing before her eyes; she beat her face and fell with the other nine old women to the ground. While they called out: "O black morning! O prodigy! O loss! O tar!" the nurse said through her tears: "In Allah's name, dear

lady Budur, collect your wits, for such conversation is unworthy of you." "Will you be quiet, wicked old woman!" cried the princess, "tell me what you have done with my black-eyed lover. His brows were arched and turned up at the corners, he lay with me until the morning, and he is most delicately and sweetly formed."

The nine old women raised their hands to heaven, crying: "O confusion! Allah preserve our mistress from madness, from snares, and from the evil eye! Her joke goes a little too far this morning!" While the nurse, beating her breast, said to the princess: "If these naughty words came to the ears of the king, he would kill us all; we would never be able to escape his wrath." "I ask you for the last time," answered Budur, with trembling lips, "to tell me what you have done with the boy whose traces I still bear upon my body."

The old women shrieked: "That one so young should have gone mad," and the princess was so angry at these words, that she unhooked a sword from the wall and threw herself upon the collection of dames, who at once fled from the apartment, jostling each other and bellowing, until they came into the presence of the king. The nurse, with tears in her eyes, told the monarch what had happened to Budur, and added: "She would have killed us all if we had not fled." "This is a terrible thing!" cried Ghayur. "But are you really sure that she has lost what she says she has lost?" The nurse hid her face between her fingers, and said: "I saw for myself, that there were certain sure signs." "It is extraordinary," said the king, and, dressed as he was, with naked feet and his night-turban upon his head, he ran to his daughter's apartment.

The king looked sternly at Budur, saying: "Is it true, as these old fools say, that you lay with someone last night, and still bear traces of his passage? That you have lost what you have lost?" "Indeed it is true, my father; and I know well that it was your doing. You chose the young man well. He is so beautiful that I burn to know why he has been taken away from me. See, here is the ring which he gave me when he took mine."

Then the king, who, as you will remember, already thought that his daughter was half mad, said to himself: "Never was such complete lunacy!" and added: "My child, I wish you to explain the reason for your undignified conduct." At that Budur tore her chemise from top to toe and beat her cheeks amid a storm of sobs; so that the king ordered the old women and the eunuchs to hold her hands in case she should do herself an injury, and even, if she became worse, to chain her with an iron collar to the window.

Then, in his despair, Ghayur returned to his own palace, cudgelling his brains to think of some cure for the daughter whom he loved with his whole heart and whom he could not believe to be irremediably deranged.

He called together all the learned men of his kingdom; all the doctors, astrologers, chemists, and those versed in the books of old; and said to them: "My daughter, the lady Budur, is in such and such a state. Who cures her shall have her to wife, and inherit my throne after my death; but who goes to her and does not make her well, shall have his head cut off."

These promises were proclaimed throughout the city and neighbouring states, so that many doctors, learned men, physicians, and chemists, came to the test; and very soon forty heads were arranged in a fair pattern

along the front of the palace. "This is not a good sign," said the others, "we consider the disease incurable." Not another of them dared risk his head: surely that is an excellent way to treat doctors.

Now the Princess Budur had a foster brother, the son of her nurse, whose name was Marzawan. Although he was a good Believer, he had studied magic and sorcery, Hindu and Egyptian books, talismanic characters, and the art of stars; then, when he had no more to learn, he travelled through far countries and conferred with the masters of secret sciences. At this point in the tale he had just returned to his own country.

The first thing he saw on entering the city were the forty heads fastened to the gate of the palace; and, when he asked what these might mean, the passers-by told him of the notable ignorance of the doctors which had so justly been punished.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

When Marzawan had kissed his mother, the nurse, he asked for news of Budur; and was confirmed in what he had heard. Therefore he became sorrowful, for he loved the princess with a love which is unusual between brothers and sisters. After reflecting for an hour, he asked his mother if it were possible for her to introduce him into the presence of the princess,

that he might see if her illness were curable. "It is difficult, my son," answered the old woman, "but, since you wish it, hasten to dress yourself as a woman and follow me." Without delay Marzawan disguised himself and followed his mother.

The eunuch on guard wished to prevent them entering Budur's apartment, but the old woman slipped a substantial present into his hand, saying: "O chief of the palace, our dear princess, who is so sick, told me that she wished to see my daughter who was brought up with her. Therefore let us pass, O father of politeness." So the eunuch, doubly gratified, told them not to stay too long and they entered.

As soon as he saw the princess, Marzawan lifted the veil which covered his face, and brought from under his garments an astrolabe, certain grimoires, and a candle. He was about to cast Budur's horoscope before questioning her, when she threw her arms about his neck, saying: "Do you also think I am mad, my brother? If so, you are mistaken. Reflect on these words of the poet:

They said: "She is mad."
I answered: "Would that I had
Followed the madman's rule
Of looking on life from another angle
To find it beautiful.
How he must laugh and laugh again
At the sneering and pointing and wrangle
Of the poor fool
Who thinks that he is sane!"

When he heard these lines, Marzawan understood that Budur was in love and nothing more. "A wise man only needs a sign," he said. "Tell me your story, and, if Allah wills, I will bring you health and

consolation." Budur told him all the details of her love, adding tearfully: "Such is my sad lot; I weep by night and day; my burning heart is hardly refreshed by love songs."

Marzawan lowered his head and stayed for an hour in deep thought, before he said: "As Allah lives, your tale is clear enough, though it is not easy to understand. I think that I can satisfy your desires, but you must be patient until you see me again. I swear that, when you look upon me next, I will be leading your lover by the hand." With that he retired precipitately, and, on the same day, left the city of King Ghayur.

For a whole month Marzawan journeyed from city to city and from island to island, hearing nothing talked of but the strange tale of the lady Budur's indisposition. At last, however, he came to a great city by the sea, the name of which was Tarab; and there the people were not talking of Budur, but of the surprising illness of a prince called Kamaralzaman, who was the son of the king of those countries. Marzawan found the details of this story so like those which he knew concerning Budur, that he at once asked where the prince might be found. Being told that he could make Khalidan in six months by land and in one month by water, he chose the sea way and embarked on a boat which was just setting sail for the islands of King Shahraman.

A favourable breeze followed the boat until the last day of her voyage, when she was actually in sight of Khalidan; then a terrible storm smote the sea, and, lifting the ship in air, broke her to pieces on a pointed rock. Marzawan was an expert swimmer, so that he alone was able to save himself by clinging to a mast which was left floating on the sea. The waves bore

him to a tongue of land on which was built the mourning palace of Kamaralzaman and his father.

Fate willed that the wazir, who had just been reporting on the state of the kingdom to Shahraman, should be looking out of the seaward window. He saw the young man come to shore and ordered his slaves to go to his assistance. These soon brought Marzawan to the wazir, who gave him a change of garments and made him drink a glass of sherbert to calm his spirits.

The wazir was delighted with the appearance of this handsome stranger; he questioned him and greatly approved of the wise answers he received. "Surely," he said to himself, "this young man must know something of medicine."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-ninety-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

The wazir said to Marzawan: "Allah has led you here that you may cure a sick man whose distemper greatly grieves his loving father and all of us. I refer to Prince Kamaralzaman, son of King Shahraman."

"Destiny is on my side," said Marzawan to himself, and added aloud: "From what illness does the king's son suffer?" "For my own part," answered the wazir, "I am persuaded that it is madness pure and simple; but his father believes rather in the evil eye, and seems almost to give credit to the strange story which his son told him."

Marzawan rejoiced as the wazir told him the tale of Kamaralzaman; for he was persuaded that the prince was none other than the young man who had left so sweet a memory within the bed of Princess Budur. He was careful, however, to say nothing of this to the wazir; and contented himself with remarking: "If I saw the young man, I could tell better what remedy should be applied to him; and, under Allah's grace, I might even be able to cure him myself."

Without a moment's delay the wazir introduced him into the presence of the prince, and the first thing which struck him was the extraordinary resemblance between Kamaralzaman and Budur. He could not prevent himself from exclaiming: "Blessed be Allah who has created two beauties so alike, giving them the same kind and the same perfection!"

Kamaralzaman, who was lying weakly upon his bed with half-shut eyes, started when he heard these words, and listened attentively while Marzawan improvised these verses, which should explain his coming to the young man while leaving King Shahraman and the wazir in ignorance:

Because I wish to remember
I will sing a certain song.

They told me that I was wounded,
But that the cup waited,
And the lute waited for me.

Why should the blue chemise
Which has done nothing
Lie so close,
Or the insensate cup
Be so long against those lips?

Do not be angry with me:
Joseph broke fewer hearts,
David was less melodious before Saul,
Mary the mother of Christ
Had not her tenderness.

Cures,
Do not talk to me of cures!

When Kamaralzaman heard these verses, a soothing freshness descended upon his heart, and he signed to his father to seat the young man by his side and leave him alone with him. Delighted to see his son interested in something at last, Shahraman seated Marzawan by the bedside and left the chamber, winking to his wazir to follow him.

Marzawan whispered in the prince's ear:

"Allah has led me hither that I may serve as a link between you and the woman you love. Here is the proof of what I say." He gave such details of the night which the two young people had passed together, that there could be no room for doubt in the prince's mind, and added: "The girl's name is Budur; she is the daughter of King Ghayur and my own foster sister."

Kamaralzaman felt his strength come back to him; he rose from the bed, and took Marzawan by the arm, saying: "I will set out with you at once for the land of King Ghayur." "It is rather far," answered the young man. "First get completely well, and then we will set out together, for you alone can cure the princess."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

Led by curiosity, King Shahraman re-entered the hall at this moment, and the breath halted in his throat for joy when he saw the shining face of his son, and heard him say: "I wish to dress and go to the hammam."

The king threw himself upon Marzawan's neck and kissed him, without thinking to ask how he had wrought this cure. He showered him with gifts and honours; he illuminated the whole city and distributed a prodigious quantity of robes of honour to his nobles; he opened all the prisons and let the captives free, so that the kingdom was filled with joy.

When Marzawan judged that the prince was strong enough, he took him aside, saying: "The moment has come for leaving; therefore make your preparations." "But," answered the other, "my father will never let me go, for he loves me too much. Ya Allah, what a misfortune! Surely I shall become ill again." Marzawan consoled him, saying: "I had foreseen that difficulty, and have invented a benevolent lie which will favour our escape. You must tell the king that you wish to hunt with me for a few days and breathe the good air into a breast too long narrowed by the sick-room. Surely he will not refuse." Kamaralzaman went delightedly and asked permission from the king, who did not dare to refuse him, but stipulated that he should lie away from home for only one night. "I would die of grief if you were absent any longer," he said; and prepared two magnificent horses, with six relays, for his son and Marzawan; and loaded a

dromedary with hunting gear and a camel with food and water-bags.

The king embraced the two young men with tears in his eyes, and saw them leave the city with their company. Once outside the walls, the youths pretended all day to be in search of game, in order to delude their grooms and huntsmen. That night they had the tents pitched, and, after eating and drinking, fell into a sound sleep. At midnight Marzawan gently woke his friend, saying: "Let us be gone while our people are asleep." Each mounted one of the relay horses and left the encampment without having been noticed.

They proceeded at a good pace till dawn and then Marzawan halted and begged the prince to dismount. Kamaralzaman did so, and when Marzawan asked him to take off his shirt and drawers, obeyed without question. "Give them to me, and wait here a little," said the young man as he tucked the garments under his arm and set off towards a place where the road branched into four. He had brought an extra horse with him from the camp, and when he reached the cross-roads, led it a little way into the forest and cut its throat. Then, staining the shirt and drawers with the animal's blood, he threw them into the dust of the road and rejoined the prince. When Kamaralzaman questioned him as to his plan, he answered: "First let us break our fast." They ate and drank, and then Marzawan explained: "When two days pass without our returning and our huntsmen report that we left them in the middle of the night, the king will send men to seek us. These will find your clothes at the cross-roads, covered with blood and containing a little horse flesh and two broken bones which I had the forethought to place within them. They will think that

you have been devoured by some savage beast and that I have fled. I know that this supposition will be a terrible blow to your father; but think of his later joy when he hears that you are alive and married to the Princess Budur!" "O Marzawan," exclaimed the prince, "it is an excellent plan, but how shall we pay the expenses of our journey?" "Do not trouble yourself for that," returned the other, "for I have brought my most beautiful jewels with me, and the least of them is worth two hundred thousand dinars."

They journeyed for many days and came at last to the city of King Ghayur, which they entered at full gallop by the great gate of the caravans.

Kamaralzaman wished to go at once to the palace, but his companion bade him be patient and led him to a khan which was much used by rich strangers. They rested there three days from the fatigues of their journey, and during that time Marzawan had made for the prince a complete astrological outfit in gold and precious metals. On the fourth day he conducted him to the hammam, and after they had both bathed, dressed him in the garments of an astrologer. Only then, and after giving him minute instructions, did he lead him to the palace and leave him at the door, in order to go himself to his mother, that she might advise the princess of his return.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundredth Night
Had Come

She said:

Kamaralzaman came up to the door of the palace and proclaimed in a loud voice to the crowd in the square and to the sentinels and door-keepers:

Remember me:
I am the master of astrology,
The chief of wizardry,
The cord of blackest curtainry,
The supreme key
Of every treasury,
The pen by whose caligraphy
Grimoir and amulet come to be,
The hand which subtilely
Spreads out the sands of prophecy
And draws electuary
From written charactry;
Being talismanic energy
My word is victory.
I make the malady
Turn aside and flee
To the emunctory;
I scorn contemptuously
In my great artistry
Either inflammatory,
Or any vomitory,
Or sternutatory,
Prayers jaculatory,
Or words of suppliancy,
Or modes propitiatory;
Thus I can guarantee

With certainty
Immediate remedy.
I am the chief of wizardry;
Come speedily,
I take not currency
Nor any other fee,
But work entirely
For notoriety:
Remember me!

The people, the guards, and the door-keepers were stupefied by such eloquence; especially as they thought that the race of doctors and magicians had ceased to be. They surrounded the young astrologer, and seeing the perfection of his beauty, were charmed and grieved at the same time; for they feared that he would suffer the same fate as those who had gone before him. Those who were nearest to the velvet-covered car on which he stood, begged him to be gone, saying: "By Allah, lord magician, do you not know the fate which awaits you here? The king is certain to command you to try your science on his daughter and then your head will go to join those others."

Kamaralzaman only answered by crying:

"Remember me,
I am the chief of wizardry;
I scorn contemptuously
In my great artistry
Or tube injectory
Or bag suspensory
Or burning pungency.
Therefore come speedily!"

And those who were round were convinced of his

knowledge and yet feared to see him fail before an incurable disease. They beat their hands together, crying: "Woe for his youth!"

The king heard the tumult outside his window and, seeing a crowd surrounding an astrologer, sent his wazir to fetch the man into his presence. As soon as Kamaralzaman stood before the throne, he kissed the earth between the king's hands, and made him this compliment:

There are eight things
Which make the wise
Bow before kings:
Knowledge and strength and power,
To give at the apt hour,
Good luck and victories,
A bird's voice on bird's wings,
A taste for subtleties.

King Ghayur looked attentively at the astrologer, and shut his eyes for a moment at so much beauty. Then he commanded the youth to sit by his side and said to him: "My child, you would look better without these medicinal garments. I would be very happy to give you my daughter to wife if you cured her; but I doubt if you will succeed and do not wish to have to do with you that which I have sworn to each who should look upon her face and fail to make her well. Therefore tell me if you consent to the conditions."

"O auspicious king," answered Kamaralzaman, "I have come from far away to prosper by my art and not to hide it in silence. I know what I risk, but I will not draw back." Then said the king to his chief eunuch: "Take him to the prisoner, as he insists."

As the two went towards Budur's apartment, the

eunuch, seeing his companion hurry, said to him: "Unhappy boy, do you really think that you will become the son-in-law of the king?" "I hope so, indeed," answered the prince. "I am certain that I can cure the princess, without even seeing her, and spread the fame of my art abroad among all this people."

"If you can do that," answered the astonished eunuch, "you will deserve every thing which can be given to you." Then said Kamaralzaman: "As I am anxious to see the princess who shall be my wife, let me go in quickly; for I will cure her from behind a curtain in her room."

The eunuch did as he was requested and the prince, sitting on the floor behind the curtain, took paper and writing materials from his belt and wrote the following letter: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

"These lines are from the hand of Kamaralzaman, son of the Sultan of Shahraman, King in the lands of Mussulman over the Isles of Khalidan.

"To Princess Budur, daughter of King Ghayur, master of Al-Buhur and of Al-Kussur, showing his love for her.

"If I would tell you of all the fire in my heart, there is no reed in the world hard enough for the expression. Yet if the ink failed, my blood would not fail; and it is the colour of flame, a fire which

has burnt me ever since that magic night when you appeared to me in sleep.

"Under this cover is your ring. I send it as certain proof that this letter comes from that young man, whose heart your glances burnt as fire burns bran, who is as yellow as saffron because he can not yet reach you for the whirlwind's ban. He cries to you *Aman* and signs himself as

"*Kamaralzaman.*

"I lodge at the Great Khan."

The prince folded this letter, and, slipping the ring inside it, sealed it and handed it to the eunuch. The slave gave it at once to his mistress, saying: "Madam, there is behind your curtain a certain young astrologer, so audacious that he pretends to be able to cure folk without seeing them. He has sent this paper to you."

No sooner had the princess opened the paper than she recognised her ring, and cried aloud: pushing aside the eunuch, she ran through the curtain and knew her lover. Then it might have been thought that she was really mad; she threw herself upon his neck, and they kissed like two doves which had been long away from each other.

The eunuch ran to tell the king what was happening, and said: "That young astrologer is more learned than any of them; he has cured your daughter without even seeing her." "Is that true?" cried the king, and the slave answered: "My lord, I have seen it with my own eyes."

Ghayur ran to his daughter's room, and, seeing that she was indeed cured, kissed her between the eyes because he loved her, and embraced Kamaralzaman, asking whence he came. "I come from the Isles of

Khalidan," replied the prince, "I am the son of King Shahraman." And straightway he told the whole story to the king.

"By Allah," exclaimed Ghayur, "this tale is so marvellous that if it were written with a needle in the corner of an eye, yet would it teach prudence to the circumspect." Straightway he ordered the cleverest scribes of the palace to write the story in the annals, that it might be handed down for future generations from century to century.

He called the kadi and his witnesses to write out the marriage contract of the lady Budur with Kamaralzaman. The city was decorated and illuminated for seven days and seven nights; the people ate, drank, and rejoiced; and the two lovers loved each other at ease in the midst of the festivities, thanking Him who had created them for one another.

One night, after a feast at which all the chiefs of the Inner and Outer Isles had been present, Kamaralzaman made use, even more marvellously than was his wont, of the sumptuous perfections of his wife, and fell into a deep sleep. His father, King Shahraman, appeared in his dreams saying: "Is it thus that you abandon me, O Kamaralzaman? See, I am dying of grief." The prince wakened with a start, and, rousing his wife, fell into a storm of sighs. "What is the matter, O eye of me?" asked Budur anxiously, "if you have a belly ache, I will make you a decoction of aniseed and fennel; if you have a headache, I will put a vinegar compress on your forehead; if you have eaten too much this evening, I will put a hot loaf wrapped in linen upon your stomach and give you a mixture of rose-water with water of flowers."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

Kamaralzaman answered: "Tomorrow we must set out for my own country where the king, my father, lies sick. He has appeared to me in a dream, and waits me weeping." "I hear and I obey!" answered Budur; and, although it was still full night, rose up to seek the king, who was in his harem.

At her order, the eunuch at the door went in and the king, on seeing him, cried: "Surely you come to announce some disaster, pitch-face?" "The princess wishes to speak to you," replied the eunuch; and Ghayur answered: "Wait till I put on my turban." When he had done so, he went out and said to his daughter: "My child, what kind of pepper have you been eating that you should be about at this time of night?" "Father," answered the princess, "I wish permission to start at dawn for the land of Khalidan, which is the kingdom of my husband's father." "I have no objection to make," said Ghayur, "provided that you return at the end of a year." The princess kissed her father's hands by way of thanks, and called Kamaralzaman, who thanked him also.

By dawn the horses were harnessed, the dromedaries and camels loaded, and every other preparation made. The king recommended his daughter to her husband in his farewell and, giving them numerous gifts in gold and diamonds, saw them a little upon their way. When the sun was well up, he made his last recommendations with tears in his eyes, and returned towards the city, while the young people continued their journey.

The tears of Kamaralzaman and Budur were soon dried by joyful expectation of seeing King Shahraman. They went forward for thirty days, and at last reached a pleasant meadow which tempted them to pitch their camp and rest for a few days. When her tent had been made ready in the shadow of a palm-tree, the lady Budur, who was weary, ate a light repast and went to sleep.

When Kamaralzaman had given orders that the other tents should be pitched far off, so that he and his wife might benefit by the isolation, he also entered the tent, and saw Budur lying in calm slumber. This sight recalled the first wonderful night which they had had together in the tower, for the young girl lay upon the carpets, with her head resting on a pillow of scarlet. She was dressed only in a chemise of apricot gauze and ample drawers of Mosul silk. From time to time the breeze lifted the filmy chemise to her navel, showing her belly which was as white as snow, with dimples in delicate places, each large enough to hold an ounce of powdered nutmeg.

Kamaralzaman first recalled these delicious lines of a certain poet:

They would sell silks to me,
But I came by your bed
And with my fingers tested the dark subtlety
Of your hair instead.
You are dressed in the narcissus and the rose
And those
Appear to me
As cool as the palm-tree.
You sleep on purple tissue;
Surely to me
Your face is the fair issue

Of dawn from thence
And your light eyes the excellence
Of stars above the sea.

Then he brought to mind a further song, which carried him to the limit of ecstasy:

Sleeper, the palm-trees drink the breathless noon,
A golden bee sucks at a fainting rose,
Your lips smile in their sleep. Oh, do not move.

Sleeper, oh, do not move the gilded gauze
Which lies about your gold, or you will scare
The sun's gold fire which leaps within your crystal.

Sleeper, oh, do not move; your breasts in sleep.
Allah, they dip and fall like waves at sea;
Your breasts are snow, I breathe them like sea foam,
I taste them like white salt. They dip and fall.

Sleeper, they dip and fall. The smiling stream
Stifles its laugh, the gold bee on the leaf
Dies of much love and rosy drunkenness,
My eyes burn the red grapes upon your breast.

Sleeper, oh, let them burn, let my heart's flower,
Fed on the rose and santal of your flesh,
Burst like a poppy in this solitude,
In this cool silence.

Kamaralzaman burnt with a desire for his wife which might not be slaked by all the cold water-springs of the world. He leaned over her and, undoing the silk cord of her drawers, stretched his hand to caress that body now become so dear to him. It en-

countered a small hard object. This he drew towards him and found to be a carnelian, held by a silken cord just above the valley of roses. In his astonishment he thought to himself: "If this stone had not extraordinary virtue and were not very dear to Budur, she would not keep it so carefully in the most precious part of her body. Surely it must be some talisman given her by her brother, Marzawan, to ward off the evil eye and all miscarriage."

Before going further with his caresses, he untied the silk cord and took the stone outside the tent to examine it. Just as he had discovered that the carnelian had four faces, engraved with talismanic characters and unknown symbols, a giant bird swooped down from the sky and, more quickly than lightning, snatched it from his hand.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

Then the bird perched out of reach on the branch of a great tree and regarded the prince with silent mockery, holding the talisman in its beak.

At this disastrous accident, Kamaralzaman's mouth fell open, and he stood still for some moments without being able to move; for he thought of the grief which Budur would feel when she heard of the loss of so dear a treasure. When he was a little recovered from his consternation, he picked up a pebble and ran towards the tree on which the bird was perched; but, as

soon as he came near enough to throw, the bird flew to a further tree; and then, as the prince still pursued, to a still further one. "He must see the stone," thought Kamaralzaman, "I will throw it away to show that I wish him no hurt." And he suited the action to the thought.

The bird, seeing the prince throw away the stone, hopped to the ground; but when Kamaralzaman put forth his hand, it fluttered out of reach. The prince jumped forward and the bird jumped away; the bird jumped away and the prince jumped forward; and this went on for hours and hours, from valley to valley and from hill to hill, until nightfall. "There is no help save in Allah!" cried the prince as he halted out of breath, and saw the bird halt also, just out of reach on the top of a little mound.

Kamaralzaman sweated more from despair than from fatigue, and was in half a mind to return to the tents; but he said to himself: "My dear Budur might die of grief if I announced to her the loss of this talisman, whose powers, though unknown to me, may seem very precious to her. Also, if I return now that darkness has set in, I may lose my way or be attacked by savage beasts." Not knowing what to decide, he stretched himself wearily on the ground. As he lay he watched the bird, whose eyes shone strangely in the night; each time he moved or tried to crawl nearer it beat its wings and cried out to signify that it was also watching. At length, worn out with fatigue and emotion, the prince slept.

As soon as he woke he decided to catch the bird at all costs; and the pursuit of the day before began again with no greater success. On the second evening Kamaralzaman beat his breast, crying: "I will follow as long as there is breath in my body!" and, having

eaten certain plants and herbs, he slept again with his face turned towards the bird, who watched him with luminous eyes throughout the night.

For ten days the pursuit continued and, on the morning of the eleventh, the bird led the prince to the gates of a city built by the sea. Here it paused, and, laying down the carnelian, uttered three cries which sounded like "Kamaralzaman," took up the talisman again in its beak and, rising in the air, flew out to sea. For some hours the prince lay raging upon the ground, broken by sobs; then he washed his face and hands in a stream, and lastly walked towards the city, thinking of Budur's grief and all the dark forebodings which she would entertain at the disappearance of himself and the carnelian. As he went, he murmured poems of separation and the pains of love, of which this was one out of a thousand:

Not to hear the fools who said:
"Ah, you loved too fair a being."
Not to see the shaking head
Wag: "She trusted to her seeing."
I stopped my ears with the enchanted song:
"Though death come after . . ."
And hid my eyes with the verse: "Life is long
And made for laughter."

Kamaralzaman entered through the gates of the city and walked about the streets, without receiving from a single one of the many inhabitants a kindly glance such as Mussulmans bestow on strangers. He walked straight ahead, and passed through the opposite gate which led to the suburban gardens.

Finding the gate open in a garden larger than the rest, he went in, and was greeted by the gardener in

Mussulman fashion. Kamaralzaman wished him peace and greedily drank in the Arabic which was addressed to him; after they had bowed to each other, the prince asked the gardener why all the people of the city looked so coldly and fiercely upon a stranger. The good old man replied:

"Glory be to Allah, my child, that you have come safely out of their hands. The people who live now in the city are invaders from the black lands of the West; they came up suddenly out of the sea one day, and massacred all the Faithful. They worship strange and incomprehensible things and speak an obscure and barbarous language; they eat evil-smelling, putrescent things, such as rotten cheese and game which they hang up; they never wash; for, at their birth, ugly men in black garments pour water on their heads, and this ablution, accompanied by strange gestures, frees them from all obligation of washing for the rest of their lives. That they might not be tempted by water, they at once destroyed the hammams and public fountains; building, in their place, shops where harlots sell a yellow liquid with foam on top, which they call drink, but which is either fermented urine or something worse. And their women, my son, are the abominations of calamity. Like the men they do not wash; but they whiten their faces with slaked lime and powdered egg-shells. They do not wear linen or drawers to protect them from the dust of the road, so that their presence is pestilential and the fire of hell will never clean them. Such are the people among whom I, the last Mussulman here left alive, must pass what rests to me of earthly existence; and yet I praise the Highest who allowed you and me to be born in a Faith as pure as the sky from which it comes."

When he had made an end of these words, the gar-

dener saw, by his listener's face, that the young man was tired and hungry; so he led him to his modest house at the bottom of the garden, and gave him food and drink. After his guest had eaten, he discreetly questioned him concerning his reason for coming to that place.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

Kamaralzaman was moved by the generosity of the gardener to such an extent that he told him the whole story of his adventures; and ended by bursting into tears.

The old man did his best to console him, saying: "My child, the Princess Budur is certain to make her way to Khalidan, your father's kingdom. Here in my house you will find affection, protection, and rest, until Allah send you a boat to take you to the neighbouring Isle of Ebony. There you will find many ships plying to Khalidan. I myself will go every day to the harbour, until I find some merchant who will consent to journey with you to the Isle of Ebony; you might wait for many years before finding one whose destination was Khalidan."

The gardener kept his word; but first days and then months passed without his finding any vessel bound for the Isle of Ebony.

I hasten to return to the lady Budur, because her

adventures were more than marvellous. When she woke, she opened her arms to clasp Kamaralzaman; great was her surprise at not finding him and greater when she saw that her drawers were undone and that the talisman had disappeared. For the time being she only thought that her husband had taken the carnelian outside to examine it, and therefore she waited patiently.

When hours passed and the prince did not return, she became very anxious; and when night fell, she said to herself: "Ya Allah, some strange thing is keeping Kamaralzaman away from me; but why is it that the talisman is gone also? O evil stone; O wicked brother, to give me as a present the cause of all my grief?"

After two days of waiting, Budur, instead of collapsing as any other woman would have done under the circumstances, found an unusual strength. She said nothing of her husband's disappearance for fear that she might be betrayed or badly served by her slaves; and she forbade her maid to say anything of it either. Knowing how perfectly she resembled Kamaralzaman, she put aside her woman's garments and dressed herself in a fair striped robe of his, which fitted exactly and left the neck at liberty. In a belt of carved gold she placed a dagger having a jade hilt encrusted with rubies; she covered her head with a rainbow-coloured silk turban fastened about the brow with a triple cord of young camel's hair. Making her slave dress in the garments which she had discarded, she took a whip in her hand and left the tent. The other walked behind her, so that all thought that she was the lady Budur and that it was Kamaralzaman who gave the order for departure.

The Princess, in the likeness of her husband, voyaged for many days until she came to a city by the sea.

She had her tent pitched near the gate and asked what the name of the city might be. When she was told that it was the capital of the Isle of Ebony, she asked what king ruled over it. "Our king's name is Armanos, and he has one daughter of surpassing loveliness, whose name is the lady Hayat Al-Nufus," answered the stranger whom she had questioned.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

She sent a letter to King Armanos in which she announced herself as Prince Kamaralzaman, son of Shahraman, lord of Khalidan. As King Armanos was on the best of terms with Shahraman, he was pleased to do the honours of the city for his son. Therefore he went out to the tents, followed by the principal people of his court, and welcomed the princess with every honour. He even persuaded her, in spite of her hesitation, to accept a lodging in his own palace; and made her entry the cause for three days sumptuous festivity throughout the whole court.

On the fourth day Armanos spoke to Budur of her journey and asked her intention in making it. That day also the Princess went to the palace hammam, without calling for the services of a rubber, and came from it so shining and beautiful that people stopped to catch their breath and thank her Creator as she passed by.

King Armanos sat by her side and, as he spoke with

her, her perfection and eloquence so wrought on him that he said: "My son, it is Allah who has sent you to my kingdom, that you may be the consolation of my declining years and act towards me as a son and heir. Will you do so, my son; will you marry my daughter Hayat Al-Nufus? No one in the world is so worthy as you of her fortune and her beauty. She is just marriageable, having crossed the threshold of her fifteenth year; an exquisite flower which I would delight to see you breathing. If you accept, I will abdicate my throne in your favour at once; because my great age is wearied by the burden of kingship."

Princess Budur was naturally embarrassed by this generous offer and, to prevent her perturbation being seen, she cast down her eyes as if reflecting, while a cold sweat, like ice, stood out upon her brow. "If I tell him that I, Kamaralzaman, am already married to the lady Budur, he will answer me that the Book allows me four wives," she said to herself; "if I tell him the truth, he may force me into marriage with himself, and the story is bound to be noised abroad to my everlasting shame. If I simply refuse his paternal offer, his love will turn to great hatred; and, when I leave his palace, he will set snares to destroy me. Therefore I must accept and let Destiny work itself out in its own way; for who knows what the gulf of the future may hide. At least, by becoming king, I will have acquired a fair land for Kamaralzaman when he returns. As for the consummation of my marriage with the child, I shall have to think out a way."

She raised her head, with a fine colour, which the king attributed to modesty, saying: "I am the submissive son of the king; I answer that to hear is to obey." King Armanos rejoiced exceedingly at this

reply and insisted on the marriage taking place at once; before all his wazirs, emirs, and chamberlains, he abdicated in favour of Kamaralzaman, and announced the change of dynasty in the city and the provinces by means of heralds. In less time than it takes to tell, festivities were organised on a scale which had never been seen before; and, amid cries of joy, to the sounds of fifes and cymbals, the marriage contract was written for the new king and Hayat Al-Nufus.

That evening the old queen, surrounded by her maidens who cried "Lu-lu-lu!" for joy, brought the young bride to Budur's room and the pretended husband took her gently and, for the first time, raised the veil from her face. Those who were by grew pale with desire and emotion when they saw this wonderful couple, and discreetly retired after a thousand compliments and good wishes, leaving the bridal pair alone in the torchlight of their chamber.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come

She said:

After a rapid inspection, Budur was delighted with the girlish charms of Hayat Al-Nufus; she saw great black frightened eyes, a colouring as pure as water, and little breasts childishly lifting the light gauze which covered them. The young bride smiled timidly with lowered eyes, when she knew that she had pleased

her husband; though she hardly dared to move, she had herself taken stock of the virgin cheeks of her companion, and found them more beautiful than any which she had yet seen in the palace. She was stirred to the depths of her being when she saw her husband approach and sit down beside her on the carpet-covered mattress.

Budur took the girl's little hands in her own and gave her a kiss upon the mouth which was so delicious that Hayat did not dare to return it, but shut her eyes and sighed for happiness. Taking the small head in the curve of her arm and leaning it against her breast, Budur softly sang lullabies to the child until she went to sleep with a happy smile upon her lips. Then she freed the slender body from its veils and jewellery and, lying down beside it, slept till morning.

The lady Budur, who had kept on most of her own clothes and even her turban, hastened to make her necessary ablutions as soon as it was light and, putting on the insignia of royalty, went to her throne-room to receive the homage of the court, to do the business of the state, to put down abuses, to give office and to take it away. Deeming these reforms urgent, she abolished tolls, customs, and prisons; so that her new subjects loved her and prayed for her prosperity and long life.

In the meanwhile King Armanos and his wife hastened to ask their daughter news of her bridal. They questioned her as to whether her husband had been gentle; they asked her if she was too tired, for they did not wish to come to the important point at once. "My husband was delightful," answered Hayat, "he kissed me on the mouth and I went to sleep on his breast to the rhythm of his lullabies. How tender and gentle he is!" "Is that all that passed?" asked Armanos, and she answered: "That was all." "Were

you not even undressed?'' stammered the queen. ''No, I was not,'' replied the little princess. Then father and mother looked at each other without saying a word, and left the apartment.

When the royal business was over, Budur returned to the marriage chamber and asked her bride what the king and queen had said to her. ''They asked me whether I was undressed,'' answered Hayat. ''As to that, let me help you,'' said Budur; and undressing the little girl, garment by garment, she lay down with her naked on the mattress.

Very gently she kissed her between the eyes, asking: ''My lamb, do you love men very much?'' ''I have never seen any except the eunuchs of the palace,'' answered the other, ''but it appeared to me that they were half men. What is it that they lack?'' ''Just what you lack yourself, sweet eyes,'' said Budur; and the child said: ''What is that?'' ''A finger!'' laughed the false bridegroom.

Little Hayat Al-Nufus uttered a stifled cry of terror and, taking her hands from under the coverlet, spread out the ten fingers before her frightened eyes; but Budur pulled her close and said, kissing her hair: ''As Allah lives, I was only jesting!'' She covered her with kisses until she was quite re-assured, and then said: ''Kiss me, gentle one.'' Their lips met and stayed. Thus they slept till morning.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come

She said:

When Budur went forth to look after the affairs of the nation, the king and queen came to their daughter and Armanos said: "The blessing of Allah be upon you, my child. I see that you are still in bed. Did he wound you too much?" "Not at all," answered Hayat, "I slept wonderfully well in his beautiful arms; this time he undressed me and covered all my body with delicate little kisses. Ya Allah, I still feel all tingling and shivery. It is true that he frightened me once by saying that I lacked a finger, but that was only a joke. His kisses were so pleasant, his fingers so sweet upon my naked flesh, his lips so warm, that I thought myself in Paradise." "But where are the tokens? Did you lose much sleep, my dear?" asked the queen. "I did not lose any!" replied the astonished child. At this her father and mother beat their faces, crying: "Oh, the shame, the unhappiness! Why does your husband so despise us?" Little by little the king entered into a violent passion of anger, and, as he withdrew, he cried so loud to his wife that Hayat Al-Nufus heard: "If he does not do his duty tonight and take our daughter's virginity, thus saving our honour, I will find a way to chastise him. I will take away the throne which I have given him, I will drive him from the palace; let him beware lest I do something worse."

When night came, Budur found the bride sobbing with her head among the cushions of the bed; when she kissed her brow and wiped away her tears, asking the reason of her despondency, Hayat Al-Nufus an-

swered in a dolorous voice: "Dear my lord, my father wishes to take away the throne which he gave you, and even hinted at worse things, because you do not take my virginity and save the honour of his name. He says that the thing must be done tonight. I only tell you this, sweet master, as a warning, and to persuade you to the act which he requires. All day I have been weeping at your danger. I pray you hasten to take my virginity and make ready the customary cloths to delight my mother's eyes. I trust to you entirely and place my body and myself between your hands."

"Now is the time," thought Budur to herself, "there is nothing else to be done; so I put my faith in Allah." Then to the young girl she said: "Sweet eye, do you love me very much?" "As I would love Paradise," answered the other. Budur kissed her on the mouth, asking: "How much more?" And the little one replied under the kiss: "I do not know; but very much." "Since you love me so," said Budur, "would you be happy if, instead of being your husband, I was only your brother?" "I would die of happiness," cried the little one, clapping her hands. "And supposing, my gentle one," went on the princess, "instead of being your brother, I were your sister, would you love me as much?" "More, more!" exclaimed Hayat, "for then I could be always with you, always play with you, always sleep with you, and never be separated." Budur drew the girl to her and covered her eyes with kisses, saying: "O Hayat, can you keep a secret to prove your love for me?" "Since I love you, everything is easy," cried Hayat Al-Nufus.

After a final kiss which robbed them both of breath, Budur stood up, and crying: "Look at me, child, and be my sister!" opened her robe from neck to waist and pulled out two shining white breasts crowned

with roses. "See, I am a woman like yourself, my dear," she said. "I am disguised as a man, because of a most strange adventure, which I shall recount to you at once."

Sitting down again and taking the bride on her knee, she told her the whole story from beginning to end.

Little Hayat Al-Nufus marvelled at this tale and, as she lay in the breast of Budur, took the other's chin in her small hand, saying: "Dear sister, what a delightful life we are going to live together while waiting for your Kamaralzaman. Allah hasten his coming, that our joy may be complete!" "May he indeed hear your petition, dear," said Budur, "I will give you to him as a second wife, and the felicity of all three of us will be perfect." The girls embraced each other and played a thousand games together, so that Hayat was astonished at the many beauties that she found in her friend. Looking up in Budur's face, she said: "How beautiful you are, my dear sister. And you are much bigger than me. I am very tiny; do you think I will ever grow up?" Budur assured the child that such would be the case. Then little Hayat impulsively poured out questions like the running of a brook. For she was but a child and understood nothing very clearly. Budur kissed her tenderly and gently explained to her many matters which had heretofore been mysteries. "Ya Allah," exclaimed Hayat, "now I understand perfectly." When I used to ask the slaves: 'What is this for?' and 'What is that for?' they were accustomed to wink for sole answer. Sometimes even they would click their tongues, which drove me into a great rage; I used to scratch my cheeks and cry louder and louder: 'Tell me what that is for?' Once, hearing my shout, my mother ran in and the

slaves said to her: 'She is yelling because she wants us to tell her what that is for.' Although I promised repentance, the queen was very angry and, baring my little bottom, gave me a furious slapping, saying: 'That is what that is for!' So I ended by believing that its only use was for slapping."

The pair talked earnestly together for most of the night. Hayat Al-Nufus was very happy with her new sister and Budur, too, was glad that the need for deception was no more.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come

She said:

When the hour approached for a visit from the king and queen, Hayat Al-Nufus said to Budur: "My sister, what shall I say to my mother when she wishes to see the customary marriage tokens?" "That is easy," smiled Budur and going out secretly, she returned with a fowl. She cut its throat and prepared the customary cloths and made the needful ablutions for Hayat Al-Nufus, saying: "You need only show her these; for happily, custom does not allow any further questions." Hayat Al-Nufus was somewhat fearful, but Budur explained that marriage rites were so sacred that no one would think of departing a hairs breadth from established practice in the matter.

As soon as the supposed king had departed to his hall of justice, the king and queen entered to their daughter, ready to give rein to violent anger if the marriage had not been consummated. But when they saw the usual signs and tokens, their happiness

knew no bounds and they ran to set open all the doors of the apartment. The women of the place trooped in with cries of joy and triumph, and the proud queen placed the ensanguined napkins on a velvet cushion, and bore them in procession round all the women's quarters. The king, for his part, gave a great feast and slaughtered countless sheep and young camels for the poor. The queen and the female guests returned to the young bride and, kissing her with many tears, stayed with her till the evening, when they led her to the hammam, closely covered against the cold.

The lady Budur sat every day upon the throne of the Isle of Ebony, reigning so justly that all her subjects loved her; but in the evening she joyfully returned to her young friend and, taking her in her arms, lay with her upon the mattress. Clasped together as if they were really husband and wife, they consoled each other with every kind of amusing and pretty game, still waiting for the time when Kamaralzaman should come to them.

All this time the prince lived in the house of the Mussulman gardener, outside the city of the unclean and inhospitable western invaders; while his father, Shahraman, in the islands of Khalidan, being bitterly convinced of his death, made all his kingdom assume mourning and built a funeral monument, in which he shut himself to grieve silently for his child.

In spite of the companionship of the old gardener, who did his best to distract him and to make him believe in the arrival of a boat that should carry him to the Isle of Ebony, Kamaralzaman became progressively sadder as he recalled his happy past.

One day, while the gardener was away at the harbour as usual, Kamaralzaman sat sadly in the garden and said over verses to himself, as he watched the

birds fighting. Suddenly his attention was attracted by the harsh cries of two great birds; he lifted his eyes and beheld them battling in the branches of a tree, with cruel strokes of beak and claw and wing. Very soon one of them fell lifeless at his feet, while the victor flew far away in the sky. Immediately, two other birds, which were larger still, flew out of a neighbouring tree and alighted by the side of the dead. One of them stood at his feet, one at his head, and both wept loudly with bowed beaks. Seeing this, Kamaralzaman also wept out of sympathy; then, after a few minutes, he saw the two birds dig a grave with their claws and beaks and bury the dead. This done, they flew away and returned carrying between them the murderer, who struggled violently to escape and uttered piercing cries. They held him down over the grave and, ripping up his belly, with a few rapid strokes of their beaks pulled forth his entrails and flew away, leaving him struggling in agony upon the grave.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

Kamaralzaman stayed motionless with surprise at such an extraordinary sight; but, when the birds had flown away, he curiously approached the place where the dead criminal was lying and, while looking at the corpse, saw in the middle of the split stomach some red

and sparkling thing. He picked it out, and fell in a faint upon the grass; for he had recovered his wife's carnelian talisman.

When he came to himself, he hugged the precious relic to his breast, crying: "Allah grant that this is a good omen, and that I will find my love again!" He kissed the stone and carried it to his forehead; then he wrapped it carefully in a piece of linen and fastened it safely round his arm, jumping for joy the while.

When he became calmer he remembered that the good gardener had requested him to cut the roots of an old locust-tree, which bore neither leaves nor fruit. He girt himself with a hempen belt and, taking an axe and basket, set to work with hearty strokes on the roots of the old tree. Suddenly he felt the iron of his tool strike against a metallic object which gave out a low grumbling sound beneath the earth. Shovelling aside the mould and stones, he found a large plate of bronze, which he hastened to lift. The hollow thus exposed showed him a stair of ten steps, hewn in the living rock; he quickly climbed down and discovered a large square cave, dating from the time of Aad and Thamud. In this cave were ranged twenty gigantic vases; lifting the cover of the first, he found it filled with ingots of red gold; a second was heaped to the brim with gold dust; and the remaining eighteen held gold in one of these two forms.

As soon as he had recovered from his surprise, he left the cave and, replacing the bronze plate, went on with his work of watering the trees in the garden until his old friend returned at night fall. The gardener's first words were filled with good news. "My child," he said, "it delights me to tell you that you will soon return to the land of the Mussulmans. I

have found a vessel, freighted by rich merchants, which will set sail in three days and bear you to the Isle of Ebony." Kamaralzaman cried aloud for joy and kissed the old man's hands, saying: "Father, I also have good news which will rejoice your heart, although I know you that are removed from the greed of this century and your heart is set above ambition. Come with me to the garden and I will show you the fortune which a compassionate Providence has prepared for you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

He led the gardener to the locust-tree and, lifting the bronze plate, led him, in spite of his astonished fears, down into the cave. When the gardener saw the twenty jars of gold, he lifted his arms and opened his eyes, crying: "Ya Allah!" in front of each vessel. "Thus is your hospitality rewarded by the Great Giver," said Kamaralzaman. "That same hand which a stranger held out to you that you might lift him from his adversity, has caused a river of gold to flow into your dwelling. This is the work of Destiny, which loves actions coloured by the beauty of kindness."

Tears flowed from the old man's eyes and ran down into his beard, before he could say: "My child, what should an old man like myself do with all this treasure? It is true that I am poor, but my happiness is

great enough; it will be complete if you give me a dirham or two to buy a winding-sheet which I can lay by my side when I come to die alone, so that the first charitable stranger may dress me in it for the Judgment Day."

This time it was Kamaralzaman who wept. At last he said to the gardener: "Father of wisdom, old man with perfumed hands, the holy solitude in which your quiet days have passed have made you forget those laws of Destiny which bind the cattle of Adam's seed, both the just and the unjust. But I am myself returning shortly to the company of greedy mortals, and I must not forget the rules which govern them, or I shall be devoured. This gold belongs to you in the sight of God; but if you wish we will share it. Only if you will not take half, I will touch none of it."

"My son," replied the gardener, "ninety years ago my mother bore me in this place; she died, and my father died also. The benevolent glance of Allah followed my footsteps as I grew up in the shade of this garden, to the murmur of this native stream. I love the stream and the garden; I love the sighing of the leaves and the sunshine and the grass on which my shadow moves at liberty, and the moon which shines above these trees and smiles upon me until the morning. All these things speak to me in voices which I understand better than the voice of man. You know that I cannot voyage with you to the country of the Mussulmans, because I am myself the last Mussulman in a land where many lived of old. I pray to Allah that my bones may whiten here, and that the last Believer may die with his face turned towards that sun which shines upon an evil world, soiled by the barbarity of the West."

The old man's hands trembled as he continued:

"As for those precious jars which you admire, since you desire it, I will leave ten of them in the cave as a recompense for the stranger who wraps me in my shroud and buries me. The difficulty is not in this; it lies in shipping the jars with you without exciting the black hearts of this city. Now the olive trees in my garden are heavy with their fruit, but olives are rare and much sought after in the Isle of Ebony. I will buy you twenty large jars, which we will half fill with gold and then complete with olives. Thus we can safely have your treasure carried to the ship."

Kamaralzaman took his friend's advice and spent the day in preparing the new jars. While he was working on the last one, he thought to himself: "This talisman is not safe upon my arm; it might be stolen during my sleep or lost in some other way. It will be better to place it at the bottom of this jar, and cover it first with gold and then with olives." This he did, and stoppered the last jar with its cover of white wood. Then, so that he might remember which one it was, he first made a notch in the leather near the bottom of it and then, being started, cut the whole of his name in fair interlacing characters.

When all was finished, he sent his old friend to advise the sailors to come for the jars in the morning. The gardener did as he was asked, and then returned to the house in a state of some fatigue. He lay down shivering, with a light fever upon him.

In the morning the old man, who had never been ill in his life before, felt that his fever had increased; but he said nothing, as he did not wish to sadden Kamaralzaman's departure. He lay upon his mattress, growing weaker every hour, and understood that his last moments were not far off.

During the day the sailors came to the garden and

asked Kamaralzaman to show them what they had to take. He pointed out the twenty jars ranged by the hedge, saying: "They are filled with olives of the finest quality. I beg that you do not knock them about too much." Then the captain, who was with his men, said: "Above all, my lord, do not be late, for tomorrow morning's wind will blow from off shore and we will be obliged to set sail." After this the men departed with the jars.

At this moment, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Kamaralzaman went back to the gardener and found that his face was very pale, though marked with a great serenity. In answer to his enquiries, he learnt of his friend's illness and was much disturbed by it, in spite of the re-assurances of the invalid himself. He prepared various decoctions of green herbs, which did little good, and watched over him that day and all through the night, seeing the fever increase every hour. In the morning the good gardener called to him and took his hand, saying: "Kamaralzaman, my son, listen! There is no God but Allah! And Muhamad is His Prophet!" Then he fell back dead.

Kamaralzaman burst into tears and stayed some time weeping by the old man's side; then he shut the eyes of the dead, performed the last rites, made him a white shroud, dug a grave, and buried the last son of

the Faith in that idolatrous land. Not till then did he think of going to join his ship.

He collected provision for the journey, locked the gate of the garden, and ran in haste to the harbour; the sun was already high and he saw the ship that should have carried him making, with all sails set before a favourable wind, for the open sea.

His grief and despair were boundless, but he hid them so that the low fellows about the shipping should not laugh at him. He went back to the garden which was now his and, lying down on his bed, wept bitterly for himself and for Budur and for the talisman which he had just lost for a second time.

In his grief at knowing that he was doomed to stay in that inhospitable country for an unknown length of time, he said to himself: "My misfortunes began with the loss of the talisman, luck came back to me when I recovered it; and now that it is gone once more who can tell what calamity hangs above my head. Yet there is no help save in Allah!" With that he rose and bought twenty new jars, as he did not wish to risk the loss of the rest of his treasure. He filled the jars with gold covered by olives, saying to himself: "They will be ready for the day on which Allah sends me a ship." After this he took up the old life again and spent his days in watering the garden, and declaiming sad verses about his love for Budur.

The ship met favourable winds and made a good passage to the Isle of Ebony; it dropped anchor alongside a jetty, overlooked by the palace where Princess Budur lived in the character of Kamaralzaman. Seeing the vessel arriving under a spread of sail and windy flags, Budur was seized with a desire to visit it, especially as she was always hoping that one of the

ships which came to her over the sea would bring her husband back to her. Therefore she ordered some of the chamberlains to accompany her and went down to the ship.

When she was alongside, she called the captain and went aboard; all too soon she learnt that Kamaralzaman was not among the passengers. Through idle curiosity, she said to the master: "What cargo have you got?" The captain answered:

"My master, beyond our lading of merchants, we have in the hold: beautiful fabrics and silk from all countries, brocades and embroidered velvets, painted cloths in the old style and the new, which make a very good show; Chinese and Indian drugs, medicines in leaf and powder, salves, pomades, collyriums, unguents, and precious balms; diamonds, pearls, coral, and yellow amber; choice spices and every kind of aromatic thing, musk, amber, incense, transparent tears of mastic, unrefined benzoin, and essences of every flower, camphor, coriander, cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon from Serendib, Indian tamarind and ginger; and, at our last port, we took on a quantity of bird-olives, those with the thin skins and sweet flesh, filled with juice and coloured like blond oil."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

Now Princess Budur had a passion for olives; so, when she heard the word, she stopped the captain in

the middle of his list and asked him, with bright desirous eyes: "How many of these bird-olives have you?" "Twenty large jars," he answered. Then she said: "Tell me, are they very large? Have they stuffed olives among them? You know the kind; they are stoned and filled with tart capers, my soul prefers them to the ones with stones." "I expect there are some of that kind among the rest," answered the astonished captain.

Budur felt her palate filled with the water of unsatisfied desire and told the captain that she wished to buy one of the jars. "As the owner missed the boat," he answered, "I cannot sell them; therefore our lord the king has the right to take what he wills." Then, turning to the crew, he cried: "Hi, there! Bring one of the twenty olive pots out of the hold."

This was done on the instant and, when one of the covers was knocked off, the princess, seduced by the appearance of the fruit, cried: "I will buy the whole twenty! How much would they fetch in the open market?" "Olives are much sought after in your kingdom, my lord," answered the captain, "I should say that they would fetch a hundred dirhams the jar." Then said Budur to her chamberlains: "Pay the captain a thousand dirhams for each jar!" She departed, followed by porters carrying the jars, and saying over her shoulder to the captain: "When you return to the owner's country, you will hand over the price to him."

Budur ran to tell her friend, Hayat Al-Nufus, of the arrival of the olives; and, when they were carried into the harem, the two women had the largest conserve plate brought to them and ordered the slaves to separate on its surface the olives from the first jar, so that they might distinguish between the natural and the stuffed. Great was their astonishment when they saw

the olives mingled with gold dust and ingots. Also they were a little disappointed, as they feared that the fruit might have been harmed by this mixture. Budur commanded other plates to be brought and had all the jars emptied. While the slaves were dealing with the twentieth, the princess saw, first the name of Kamaralzaman carved upon it and then the talisman, shining red among the yellow olives. She uttered a great cry and fell fainting into the arms of Hyat Al-Nufus; for she had recognized the carnelian which had stayed so long fastened to the silk knot of her drawers.

When she came to herself through the ministrations of her friend, she carried the stone to her lips with sighs of contentment and then, dismissing her slaves, said to Hayat: "Dear sweetheart, this is the talisman which separated me from my husband; now that I have found it again, I feel in my heart that he will return to me and fill the souls of both of us with happiness."

She sent for the captain of the ship and, when he appeared before her, asked him what the owner of the olives did in his own country. "He is an assistant gardener," answered the other, "he should have come with us to sell them in your kingdom, but missed the boat." Then said Budur: "The best of the olives were stuffed. As I tasted them I recognized that they could only have been prepared by my old cook, for he alone of all men could make a stuffing of capers which at once raises the appetite with its sharpness and soothes the palate with complete softness. This wicked cook of mine fled one day, for fear that I should punish him for having split the head of a kitchen boy who had accidently ruined his *chef d'œuvre*. You must set sail at once and bring him back to me; I will pay you well if you are diligent in the search; if you are not, you shall never land in my

kingdom again; or, if you do land, you shall be put to death with all your crew."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When The Two-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night Had Come

She said:

The captain was constrained to undertake this mission and, although he knew his departure would prejudice his sales, he comforted himself with hopes of the king's liberality. Allah permitted his ship to make a swift voyage to the unbelieving city; so that a few nights later, the captain disembarked with the strongest of his crew.

He hastened to the garden where Kamaralzaman was living and knocked at the door. The prince was sitting sadly, after his day's work, reciting verses on the subject of separation; and when he heard the knocking on the door, he rose and cried: "Who is there?" The captain answered in a feigned and sorrowful voice: "One of Allah's poor!" The prince felt his heart beat compassionately when he heard one asking for help in his native tongue; therefore he opened the door and immediately fell into the hands of the sailors, who pinioned him. Seeing twenty olive pots ranged by the hedge as before, they took them up and bore them to the ship, which immediately set sail.

The captain came up to Kamaralzaman, followed by some of his crew, and said: "So you are the lover

of olives who split the child in the king's kitchen? As soon as we get in, you will find an impaling post ready to return the compliment, unless you would rather be killed in the meanwhile by these jolly fellows who are fed up with monotony." As he said this, he pointed to the sailors who winked at the young man and considered him an excellent windfall.

Although his bonds had been unfastened as soon as the vessel sailed, Kamaralzaman had so far said no word; but now, being unable to remain silent under such accusation, he cried: "I take refuge in Allah! Are you not ashamed to speak in this way? Pray for the Prophet!" "I do pray for Him," answered the captain. "I pray that the blessing of Allah be upon him and upon his people. Yet it was certainly you who wounded the boy."

Kamaralzaman cried out afresh: "I take refuge in Allah!" and the captain said: "May Allah be merciful to us all!" Then exclaimed the prince: "I swear before you all, on the life of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) that I understand nothing of what you say, and that I have never set foot in the island to which you are taking me. Pray for the Prophet, good people!" Then all replied according to custom: "May the blessing of Allah fall upon him!"

"Am I to understand, then," continued the captain, "that you have never been a cook and never split a child in your life?" Kamaralzaman spat indignantly on the deck, saying: "I take refuge in Allah! I shall answer no more." "That is as you like," said the captain, "my business will be done when I hand you over to the king. If you are innocent you must get out of your scrape in the best way that you can."

Soon the ship came to the Isle of Ebony and the

captain at once led Kamaralzaman to the palace, where he was immediately conducted into the presence.

Now Princess Budur had hit upon a plan, which was really a very clever one for a woman, to safeguard the interest of both of them. As soon as she saw the captain's prisoner, she recognised her beloved, and became as yellow as saffron. Her courtiers put down this change of colour to anger; while the prince, in his old gardener's robe, trembled before the monarch who looked at him so closely. He was far from guessing that he was in the presence of her for whom he had shed so many tears.

At last Budur gained control of herself and said to the captain: "You may keep the price which I paid for the olives as a reward for your faithful service." "And what shall be done with the other twenty pots which I have in my hold?" asked the delighted sailor, as he kissed the earth before the throne. "Send them to me and you shall receive a thousand dinars of gold," said the supposed king as she dismissed the captain.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come

She said:

Turning towards Kamaralzaman, who stood before her with lowered eyes, Budur said to the chamberlains: "Take this young man to the hammam and

then habit him sumptuously; bring him before me tomorrow at the first hour of the diwan."

The princess hastened to her friend, Hayat Al-Nufus and said to her: "My lamb, our well-beloved has returned. As Allah lives, I have thought of a plan, which will prevent his recognition of me betraying us in the sight of any who see one day's gardener made king upon the next. My scheme is such that were it written with needles on the inside corner of an eye, yet would it serve as a lesson for the circumspect." Hayat threw herself joyously into Budur's arms, and that night the two girls went to sleep at once so that they might later receive their love in all freshness.

Next morning, as Kamaralzaman stood in his rich robes before the throne: his face shining from his bath, his slight waist and mountainous croup shown off by the well fitting tissues; the emirs and chamberlains were not surprised to hear the king say to the grand-wazir: "Give this young man a hundred slaves to serve him, with allowances from the treasury worthy of the rank to which I raise him from this moment." Then Budur named her husband a wazir among the wazirs, and gave him a complement of horses, mules, and camels, with well-filled cupboards and chests.

After this she withdrew; but next morning, still in the character of a king, she called Kamaralzaman before her and, taking away his appointment from the old grand-wazir, invested it upon the prince; so that he sat in council straightway and began the direction of affairs of state.

When the diwan rose, Kamaralzaman went aside and reflected deeply, saying to himself: "The honour and friendship with which this young king has loaded

me in the presence of all his people must certainly have some reason; but what is it? The sailors who brought me here said that I was accused of having harmed a boy; and the king, instead of punishing me, sends me to the hammam and richly rewards me. What can lie behind so strange a happening? . . . As Allah lives, I have found the reason, and it is a wicked one! The king, who is young and handsome, must think that I am a lover of boys and has treated me so splendidly on that account. But I swear that I will never undertake such duties. I will discover his plan and, if he wishes either himself or myself to suffer the shameful thing, I will return all his gifts and go back to my garden."

Kamaralzaman went to Budur and said: "O auspicious king, you have loaded your slave with honours and positions which are usually only accorded to the white hairs of wisdom, while I am still a young boy. If there is not some unknown reason behind all this, then the thing passes my understanding."

Budur smiled and looked at Kamaralzaman with languorous eyes, saying: "O handsome wazir, there is, as you say, a reason behind all this; it is the sudden fire which your beauty has lighted in my heart. The colouring of your cheeks is both calm and delicate; I am quite in love with the colouring of your cheeks." "Allah lengthen the days of your majesty," said Kamaralzaman, "but your slave has a wife whom he loves with his whole heart, weeping for her throughout every night since Fate parted them. Your slave requests permission to journey on across the sea, after having given back those delightful things with which you wish to honour him."

Budur took the young man's hand, saying: "Be seated, O fairest of wazirs. Do not speak of depar-

ture; but stay here with one who burns for the beauty of your eyes and who is very ready, if you return his passion, to seat you on the throne beside himself. I, even I, only became king for the love which the old king bore me and the complacence with which I answered it. Gentle youth, you must learn something of the customs of our country; for it is one in which beauty is the sole title to eminence. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

"Do not forget this truth of one of our greatest poets:

Our time recalls the age of Lot,
The friend of Allah, who had got
A beard
On cheeks like roses bending to the waters;
When angels came to visit him
He kept the lovely cherubim,
Nor feared
To throw the naughty populace his daughters.

God recompensed his charming fault,
By turning his good wife to salt,
A dame
With shrewish tongue and feminine opinions.
Our age like his, as I repeat,
Has learnt to cultivate one sweet
Clear flame
For little girls and paint-and-perfume minions."

When Kamaralzaman heard these verses and recognised their trend, he blushed like a coal under the bellows, and said: "O king, your slave must confess that he has no taste or aptitude for such things; he is too slight to bear weights and measures which would break the back of an old porter."

The lady Budur laughed heartily at this, and continued: "I do not understand your backwardness, delicious boy. Listen and I will tell you about this thing. Either you are a major or a minor: if you are a minor, you have no responsibilities and cannot be blamed for anything you do; if you are a major why do you hold back, for you are master of your own body and may do what you will? Nothing happens that was not written; and I myself might more reasonably be backward, seeing that I am smaller than you are. But, on the contrary, I apply these charming verses to myself:

As the youth saw me, his heart
Was moved, and he whispered: "O my splendid!
Allah will not let us part."
I answered: "Such a thought is reprehended;
In fact, a lot of people call it awful."
He said: "Oh, they—oh, they!
With me all things are lawful."
And I was too polite to disobey.

Kamaralzaman saw the light change to darkness before him as he heard these lines; he lowered his eyes saying: "O glorious king, you have many young women, slaves, and beautiful virgins in your palace; no other monarch has ever possessed the like. Why then would you neglect all these for me? Do you not know that all pleasures are lawful with women?

You may use your slaves in any way you may see fit."

Budur smiled, looking sideways at the prince through half-shut eyes: "Nothing could be more true, O wise and handsome wazir," she retorted, "but when taste changes desire, when our senses become refined and our humours alter their direction, what is to be done? But let us leave a discussion which is certain to come to nothing, and listen together to the verses which our chief poets have made upon this subject. One of them has said:

Come with me to the fruit-seller's green shade:
Here on cool palm-leaves you may see displayed
Ripe figs with their emotional browns bums;
And in the place of honour you may find
The small and rosy sycamores are lined
Yea, fruit of sycamore for each who comes.

A second has said:

Ask the girl whose ankles slim,
Entrance the boldest of the Jinn
Why she prefers the taste of lemons
To pomegranates and water-melons!

Another has said:

Though my present joy divine
Is concerned with newer wine,
Taste for vintage old ne'er ends
And my less observant friends,
When they see me thus abstain
Think that I have gone insane.

Another has said:

Brown-breasted Zaynab, Hind whose hair is dyed
With youthful art, both say that I neglect them;

I have found roses in my friend's fair talk
Fairer than any rose which ever decked them;
Hind cannot tempt my senses with her walk
And Zaynab's hidden charms cannot affect them.
Even their bosoms would entice in vain
One who has learnt the sweet of muscles and a mane.

Another has said:

Who says this fawn of boyish grace
Is lovely as a girl,
Commits a blasphemy:
There is a difference.
Not form alone, nor wholly face
One is a ruby, t'other pearl.
Though both look pleasantly—
There is a difference.

Another has said:

I freed you, child, for I am certain
You can't conceive new answer to my wooing.
Oh, I am weary of these oft-played skits
Which, at the first rising of the curtain
(Even before I know what I am doing)
Hurry indecently to birth
And fill the suffering earth
With ranks and ranks and ranks of vain
And useless chits.

Another has said:

A wife is that unpleasant thing which gets you
To lie with her and, when no child is born,
Ignores your tedious lassitude and frets you
By saying in a voice she means for scorn:
"If being hard for women so upsets you,
I promise you another kind of horn."

Another has said:

A man lifts up his arms to God
Asking that bliss
Be his;
A woman lifts her heart in air
With the same prayer:
Nor is this odd,
Seeing
It comes from somewhat deeper in her being.

And yet another has said:

Some women think, because they have
Customs like men, that they can save
Their faces by analogy. . . .
I showed one child her fallacy
The other day, or rather night.
She smiled upon me, sweet and light
And when I said: "Love's out of fashion."
Instead of flying in a passion
She smiled the more and said: "I know
That modern men do not do so;
But I am up-to-date." I spoke,
"Although I see your twin-edged joke,
I am unworthy, heart of me,
Of such great hospitality."

Hearing all these poems, Kamaralzaman thought that there could be no doubt as to the intentions of the king, and decided that it would be useless to resist any further. Also he was a little tempted to experience for himself this new fashion of which the poets spoke.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

So he answered: "King of time, as you insist, I ask you to promise me that we shall do the thing together once and once only. If I consent, it is only that I may show you how much better it would be to return to the old fashion. In any case, I beg you to give me a formal undertaking that you will not ask me to commit a second time an act for which I ask Allah's pardon in advance." "I give you my formal promise," cried Budur, "and I also pray to the Merciful One that He may lead us from the darkness of error into the light of true wisdom. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary that we try the thing once, for the reason which the poet gives:

The good, the friends of Allah, countless times
Accuse us of unknown and nameless crimes.
God says false accusation is a sin,
Come let us save them from it, dear. Begin!

With that she rose and dragged the prince towards the great mattress, as he tried to defend himself a little and shook his head, sighing: "There is no refuge save in Allah! This would not happen if He did not mean it to." Urged on by the jesting princess, he took off his baggy trousers and his linen drawers. Blushing for shame, and asking Allah's pardon from his his heart, he waited, miserably ill at ease, the command of the king. The supposed sultan encouraged him with fair words. Budur, wishing to have sport with her husband, ordered him to assume an attitude that was quaintly funny. Kama-

ralzaman, understanding nothing of the matter, did as he was bid. "For one who is a novice in such matters, you seem," said Budur, "an apt student." "I do as you command, O king, yet I would even now ask you to think twice upon so grave a matter." "Perhaps," answered Budur, "your counsel is not without perfection." "I assure you, O king, that, in this thing, my words are golden. Firstly, I bid you remember that I am a stranger in a strange land. Every law of hospitality bids a true Believer to treat such an one honourably. Secondly, O king, I cannot banish from my mind the thought of my wife, for whom my heart, even now, sheds hot and bitter tears." Kamaralzaman had risen and stood facing Budur as he spoke thus. His eyes were like two stars shining in the heavens and, when he spoke of his wife, two tears, moulded like pearls, stole down his fair cheeks.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

Budur burst into such a peal of laughter that she almost fainted. Then she became serious and, resuming her sweet and woman's voice, said: "O my dear husband, have you so quickly forgotten those fair nights of ours?" She rose and, throwing aside her masculine garments, appeared naked with her heavy hair falling down her back.

Kamaralzaman recognised his wife Budur, daughter of King Ghayur, master of Al-Buhur and Al-Kussur; they embraced, they clasped each other, they wept

for joy, they confused each other with kisses on the mattress. The princess said many verses, and this was one of them:

My beloved dances,
Setting one foot before the other.

This is my beloved,
The flowers are a carpet for his dancing.

The dust of his dancing
Is a balm upon my tired eyes.

I have seen the dawn dancing
Upon the face of my beloved:
O daughters of Arabia,
How could I be unmindful of him?

When Budur had told all her story to Kamaralzaman and he had answered with his own adventures, he began to blame her, saying: "That which you did tonight was most extraordinary." "As Allah lives, it was only a joke," she replied; and they continued to kiss and to caress each other until the morning came.

With the coming of dawn, Budur went to King Armanos, father of Hayat Al-Nufus, and told him the truth about herself, adding that his daughter was still a virgin. Armanos marvelled to the limit of marvel and ordered the whole prodigious story to be inscribed in golden letters upon parchment of exceeding whiteness. Then he turned to Kamaralzaman, saying: "O son of Shahraman, will you become one of my family and take my maiden daughter, Hayat Al-Nufus, as your second wife?" "I must first consult the lady

Budur," answered Kamaralzaman, "for I owe all my respect and love to her." Turning to the princess, he said: "Have I your consent to marry the child?" "Indeed you have," answered Budur, "I myself have kept her for you, that she might gladden your return. I am so grateful to her for all her kindness, that I will willingly take the second place."

Then Kamaralzaman turned to King Armanos, saying: "My wife willingly consents, saying that she would be happy to be your daughter's slave."

The old king rejoiced with a greater joy than he had known in all his life, and went to sit once more upon his throne, that he might tell the whole story of Kamaralzaman and Budur to the wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, and notable persons of his kingdom. He informed them of his intentions with regard to Hayat Al-Nufus, and solemnly proclaimed Kamaralzaman king of the Isle of Ebony in the place of Budur. All who heard him kissed the earth between his hands, and answered: "Since Prince Kamaralzaman is the husband of our dear king, we accept him joyfully and will be his faithful slaves."

King Armanos moved all his limbs with joy, and, sending for the kadis and their witnesses, had a contract of marriage written upon the spot for Kamaralzaman and Hayat Al-Nufus. He ordered general rejoicing and held marvellous feasts, killing thousands upon thousands of animals to feed the poor and sorrowful, and presenting gifts of money to the army and the people. There was not one soul in all the land who did not pray for the long life and happiness of Kamaralzaman and his two queens.

Kamaralzaman governed his kingdom as perfectly as he contented his two wives, with whom he passed alternate evenings. Budur and Hayat lived together

in harmony, allowing, it is true, the nights to their husband, but spending the days with each other. Kamaralzaman sent messengers to his father, King Shahraman, to tell him of his happiness, and to promise that he would visit him as soon as he had put to death all the western invaders in that city by the sea, which had once been inhabited by Mussulmans.

In the course of time Queen Budur and Queen Hayat Al-Nufus, who had been wonderfully impregnated by their king, gave birth each to a man-child, as excellent as the full moon. All lived together in complete happiness until the end of their days. Such is the marvellous tale of Kamaralzaman and Princess Budur, Moon of Moons.

At this point, Shahrazade smiled and fell silent.

Little Doniazade, whose cheeks were usually so white, had grown very red at the last part of this tale her eyes were round with pleasure, curiosity, and confusion so that at last she covered her face with her two hands, but looked through the fingers.

While Shahrazade was refreshing her tired voice with an iced cup of raisin juice, Doniazade clapped her hands, crying: "O my sister, what a shame that this delightful tale should be so soon finished! This is the first of its kind that I have heard you tell and . . . I do not know why I am blushing like this."

Shahrazade, after swallowing a draught, looked at her sister out of the corners of her eyes, saying:

"What will you think when I have told you the Tale of Beauty-Spot? . . . Only first I mean to tell

you the tender Tale of Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair."

Doniazade jumped for joy, crying: "O sister, please tell me about Beauty-Spot before you recount the tale of those people with delightful names, Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair."

"But Beauty-Spot was a boy, my dear," answered Shahrazade.

Then King Shahryar, whose sadness had quite disappeared at the opening sentences of the tale of Budur, which he had heard with the greatest attention, said: "O Shahrazade, I must confess that the tale which you have just told pleased me, even rejoiced me, even incited me to find out more about that new fashion which Budur described in prose and verse. If the stories which you promise us contain explanatory details of this unknown pastime, you may begin at once."

But at this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

King Shahryar said to himself: "As Allah lives, I will not kill her until I have heard many more details of the new fashion, for at present it seems to me both obscure and complicated."

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come

Doniazade cried: "O Shahrazade, dear sister, please begin!"

Shahrazade smiled at her sister, and then, turning towards King Shahryar, said:

THE TALE OF HAPPY-HANDSOME AND HAPPY-FAIR

It is related—but Allah is all-wise and all-knowing—that there was once a rich and respected merchant in the city of Kufa, whose name was Spring. A year after his marriage the blessing of the Highest descended upon his house, for a handsome son was born to him. As the child came into the world smiling, his father called him Happy-Handsome.

Seven days after the birth of his son, the merchant Spring went down to the slave market to buy a handmaiden for his wife, and, looking over the women and boys who were exposed for sale, saw a pleasant-faced slave, who carried her little daughter fastened on her back by a broad belt. Saying to himself: "Allah is generous," he approached the broker and asked how much the two would cost him. "Fifty dinars, neither more nor less," said the broker; and at once the merchant answered: "I will take them; write out the contract and receive the money." When these formalities had been gone through, the merchant said kindly to the young woman: "Follow me, my child," and led her to his house.

As soon as his wife saw the slave, she exclaimed: "O husband, why have you gone to this useless expense? For, although I have just risen from childbed, I can still manage the affairs of the house as I did before." "Dear wife," answered the merchant, "I bought this slave because of her little daughter, whom I intend to bring up with our own Happy-Handsome. From what I have seen of her I prophesy that, when she has grown up, she will not have her equal for beauty in all the lands of Irak, Persia and Arabia."

The merchant's wife asked the slave her name, and

the other answered that she was called Prosperity. "As Allah lives it suits you!" cried the delighted wife, "and what is your daughter's name?" "Fortune," answered the slave. Pleased by this omen, the mistress exclaimed: "May it be so! I pray that Allah will continue prosperity and fortune upon those who have bought you, O white auspicious face!"

Then turning to her husband she said: "As it is the custom for folk to give a new name to the slave they buy, what will you call the little girl?" "It is for you to choose the name," answered Spring. "Then let us call her Happy-Fair," exclaimed his wife. "An excellent name!" said the merchant.

Happy-Fair was brought up with Happy-Handsome on exactly the same footing. The two grew every day in beauty and called each other brother and sister.

When Happy-Handsome was five years old, it was time to celebrate his circumcision, but the merchant waited for the birthday of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!), so that all possible beauty might attend the precious rite. With due solemnity the child was circumcised and, instead of crying, found the operation pleasant and smiled sweetly. An imposing procession was formed of relations, friends, and acquaintances, which walked through all the streets of Kufa with flags and clarinets at its head. Happy-Handsome was perched on a red palanquin, borne by a mule with brocaded trappings, and little Happy-Fair sat by his side, fanning him with a silk handkerchief. Amid the joyful "Lu-lu-lu!" of his friends, the merchant Spring walked proudly, leading the docile and important mule by the bridle.

As soon as the procession returned to the house, the guests came one after the other to take leave of the merchant and congratulate him, saying: "Blessing

and honour be upon you; may every joy that your soul desires continue with you throughout a long life."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

When the children were twelve years old, the merchant Spring found Happy-Handsome in act to play the husband with little Happy-Fair. Therefore he took him aside, saying: "Thanks to the blessing of Allah, my child, you have now reached the age of twelve. Henceforth you must not call Happy-Fair your sister, for I must tell you that she is the daughter of our slave, Prosperity, although she was brought up in the same cradle with you. Your mother tells me that the child last week reached her marriageable epoch; so she must now veil her face until a husband is found for her who shall add to the number of our faithful slaves."

"As Happy-Fair is no longer my sister," said Happy-Handsome to his father, "I would like to have her for my own wife." "We must ask your mother's permission," answered the merchant.

Happy-Handsome ran to his mother and kissed her hand, saying: "I wish to have Happy-Fair as my secret wife." "She belongs to you, my dear," answered his mother, "your father bought her for you."

Delighted to have gained his point, the boy hurried to his one-time sister and took her by the hand; that night they slept together as happy married folk.

For five blissful years they lived together, and in the whole city of Kufa there was not to be found a girl more beautiful, more submissive, or more learned, than the daughter-in-law of the merchant Spring. Happy-Fair had used her leisure to learn the Koran, various sciences, Kufic and ordinary character, literature and poetry; and the practice of stringed instruments. She had studied singing to such purpose that she was perfect in fifteen ways and, if she was given a single word of the first stanza, she could, from her own invention, prolong a song for several hours or even all night, with infinite variations and ravishing rhythms.

Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair spent the warm hours of each day sitting in their garden on the naked marble of the fish-pond, refreshed by the cool water and the cool stone. There they ate the light melting flesh of water-melons, almonds and nuts, roast and salted corn; here they would pause in their nibbling to smell the roses and jasmin, or to recite exquisite verses. Sometimes, for instance, Happy-Handsome would beg the girl to play a prelude on her double-stringed guitar and the two would sing alternate stanzas such as these:

Girl,
It is raining flowers
And small coloured birds,
Let us wander with the wind
To warm Baghdad,
To the rose domes.

Not so, lord;
Let us stay in the garden
Under the gold palms
And dream.

Girl,
Diamonds fall on the blue leaves,
The curves of the branches are beautiful
Against the sky.
Rise,
Shake the drops from your hair.

Not so, lord:
Lay your head upon my knees,
Taste the flowers of my breast
Among my garments,
And listen to the light wind.

Or they would sing verses such as these:

I am happy and light
Like a light dancer.

Breathe no more,
O lips red upon flutes;
Be still,
Fingers on silver strings;
That we may hear the palms.

The palms are girls
Standing under the night
And whispering to each other,
Their green hair dances
To the flute-playing of the west wind.

I am happy and light
Like a light dancer.

Perfumed delight,
The singing of your voice
Builds up a palace of living marble
For Him who bade love be beautiful,
Perfumed delight.

You who are darkness about my eyes,
I will paint the lids of them azure
With a stick of crystal,
And in a bright paste of henna
Stain my fingers,
My hands shall be date-coloured
For your pleasure,
I shall burn a delicate incense
Below my breasts for
You who are darkness about my eyes.

Thus Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair passed their mornings and evenings in the calm and sheltered life of a garden.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

Alas, alas! that which the finger of 'Allah has written upon the brow of man, the hand of man can in no wise efface; though he had wings, no one could escape his destiny. The buffets of Fate were made ready for Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair, but the benediction of their birth was such that they would escape final and incurable misfortune.

The khalifat's governor in Kufa, hearing of the beauty of Happy-Fair, said to himself: "I must find some way to abduct this paragon, this charming musician; for she will make a splendid present to give to the Commander of the Faithful, Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan!"

When the day came on which the governor finally determined to put his plan into execution, he sent for a very cunning old woman, whose usual business was the recruiting and special instruction of young slaves, and said to her: "I wish you to go to the house of the merchant Spring and get to know a slave belonging to his son, a girl called Happy-Fair, who is said to be both musical and beautiful. By hook or by crook you must bring her here to me, for I wish to send her as a present to the khalifat." "I hear and obey!" said the old woman and at once went out to make her preparations.

Early next morning she dressed herself in drugget, hung round her neck a prodigious chaplet of thousands of beads, fastened a gourd to her belt, took a crutch in her hand, and made her way with dragging steps towards the house of the merchant Spring. At every few paces she would stop with a loud and holy sigh: "Praise be to Allah! There is no other God but Allah! There is no help save in Allah! Allah is the Highest!" Thus were all the people upon the road she took edified in the extreme. She came at last to the house and knocked at the door, saying: "Allah is generous, O Benefactor, O Giver!"

A respectable old man, who had been for a long time in the service of Spring, came to the door and, inspecting the devout caller, determined that her face did not bear the imprint of piety. For her part, the old woman took an instinctive dislike to the door-keeper and gave him a side-long glance; so, to protect himself from the evil eye, he said beneath his breath: "My left five fingers in your right eye, the five others in your left!" then aloud: "What do you want, old aunt?" "I am a poor old woman whose sole concern is prayer," she answered, "and now that the

time of prayer is at hand I wish to enter this house and make my devotions." The good door-keeper objected, saying harshly: "Walk on, now; this is not a mosque or an oratory, but the house of the merchant Spring." "I know that well," answered the old woman, "but is any mosque or oratory more worthy of prayer than the blessed house of Spring and his son Happy-Handsome? Also, I would have you know, O dry-faced door-keeper, that I am a woman well thought of in the palace of the Commander of the Faithful at Damascus. I only journeyed thence to visit the sacred places and to pray upon all those spots which are worthy of veneration." But the door-keeper answered: "I can see that you are a holy woman but that is no reason why you should come in here. Walk on now!" The old woman insisted loud and long until the noise reached the ears of Happy-Handsome, who came out and heard the old woman saying: "How can you prevent a woman of my quality entering the house of Happy-Handsome when the most closely guarded doors of the great are ever open to me?"

Happy-Handsome smiled as was his wont and, begging the old woman to follow him, brought her in and led her to the apartment of Happy-Fair. The old dame looked at the girl while she wished her peace and was stupefied by her beauty.

Happy-Fair, seeing the saintly old woman come in to her, rose in her honour and returned her bow respectfully, saying: "May your coming be a good augury, O excellent mother! Be so obliging as to rest yourself." "The hour of prayer is at hand, my daughter. Let me pray!" answered the old woman, as she turned in the direction of Mecca and threw herself into the attitude of prayer. She stayed so

without moving until the evening and none dared interrupt so holy an occupation; during that time she took no notice of what was going on round her, because of the depth of her ecstasy.

At last Happy-Fair plucked up courage to approach the saint, saying sweetly: "My mother, rest now if it is only for an hour." "My child," answered the old woman, "those who do not fatigue their bodies in this world may not hope to taste that rest which is laid up for the chosen pure in Paradise." Happy-Fair was much edified, and said: "We beg you to honour our table with your presence and to share bread and salt with us." "I have made a vow of fasting, my daughter," replied the other, "think no more of me but rejoin your husband; for when one is young and beautiful it is right to eat and drink and care for happiness."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come

She said:

Happy-Fair went to her husband and said to him: "Master, let us beg this saint to make her home with us, for the piety of her face will light up all our house." "Take no thought for that," answered Happy-Handsome, "I have already set aside a room for her and furnished it with a new mat and a mattress, with a basin and a ewer. No one will disturb her there."

The old woman passed the night in praying and

reading the Koran at the top of her voice; at dawn she washed and went to her hosts, saying: "I have come to say farewell; may Allah guard you!" "But, mother," said Happy-Fair, "how can you leave us thus easily when we are so delighted with the thought of having our house made permanently blessed by your presence, and have already set aside our best room for your quiet prayers?" "The blessing and the grace of Allah be upon you, my children!" said the dame. "Now that the virtue of Mussulman charity holds the chief place in your hearts, I desire to be sheltered by your hospitality. Only I would beg you to command your dry-faced and unobliging door-keeper not to oppose my entrance at the hour when I can return. I now go to visit the sacred places of Kufa, where I will pray to Allah that He may reward you according to your deserts; after that I will return to sweeten myself with your charity." The two young people kissed her hands and carried them to their brows; and she departed.

Alas, poor Happy-Fair! Had you but known the reason of this foul old woman's coming, the black plans which she nourished against your peace! But who may divine what is hidden, or unveil the future?

The beldame went straight to the governor's palace and into his presence. "O unweaver of spider's webs, O subtle and sublime practitioner of evil, what have you accomplished?" asked the governor. "Such as I am, O master," answered the old woman, "I am but your pupil . . . I have seen the girl Happy-Fair; the womb of fecundity has never before brought forth such beauty." "Ya Allah!" cried the governor; and the old woman continued: "She is steeped in delights, she is a running river of sweetness and unconscious charm." "O beating of my heart!" exclaimed the

governor; and the old woman answered: "What then would you say if you heard the ring of her voice, which is more refreshing than the sound of water under an echoing arch? What would you do if you saw her antelope eyes, which are modestly cast down?" "I am afraid that I could not do more than admire," said the governor, "for, as I have told you, I intend her as a present to the khalifat. Make haste with your plots, I beg you." "I must ask a whole month for them," she said. "Take the month, but mind that you succeed," he replied. "Here to begin with are a thousand dinars, as earnest of my generosity."

The old woman fastened the money within her belt and began a daily series of visits to the house of Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair, who as time went on showed her more and more respect and consideration.

When she had become, as it were, perpetual adviser to the household, she said to Happy-Fair: "My daughter, conception has never visited your young loves. Would you like to come with me to ask the blessing of holy ascetics, old men loved by Allah, santons and walis who are in communication with the Highest? These walis are known to me and I have experienced their great power to do miracles and accomplish prodigious matters in the name of Allah. They cure the blind and infirm, they raise the dead, they swim through the air, they walk on the water. As for the fecundation of women, that is one of the least privileges which God has given them. It suffices to touch the skirt of their robe or to kiss their beads, and the thing is done."

Happy-Fair felt her spirit tremble with a desire for child-bearing as she answered: "I must get leave

from my master to go with you, therefore let us wait till he comes back." "Tell your mother-in-law, that will be enough," said the old woman. The young wife ran to Happy-Handsome's mother, saying: "In Allah's name give me leave to go forth with this holy saint to visit the walis, the friends of Allah, and ask for a blessing from them in their pure abode. I promise to return before Happy-Handsome." "My daughter," answered the old woman, "think of your husband's grief if he returned and did not find you. He would blame me for having given you permission."

Here the old woman interrupted, saying: "I promise that we will make a quick round of the sacred places without stopping to sit down, and that I will bring her back in no time at all." So Happy-Handsome's mother gave her consent with a sigh.

The old woman led forth Happy-Fair and conducted her to a lonely pavilion in the palace garden. There she left her alone and went to inform the governor of what she had done. He hurried to the building and halted thunderstruck upon the threshold by the beauty of his captive.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come

She said:

Happy-Fair, seeing a strange man enter the place, veiled her face and burst into sobs, as she looked round in vain for a way of escape. As the old woman did not come back, she suddenly realised her perfidy

and called to mind certain words of the good door-keeper concerning the guileful eyes of the pretended saint.

As soon as the governor had satisfied himself that it was really Happy-Fair, he shut the door upon her and gave rapid orders. He wrote a letter to the khalifat Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan and intrusted the letter and the girl to the commander of his guards, bidding him set out immediately for Damascus. The soldier forcibly placed Happy-Fair in front of him on a fast dromedary and rode off, followed by a few slaves. Throughout all the journey Happy-Fair hid her face in her veil and sobbed silently, paying no attention to the pace, the halts or departures, and replying with neither word nor sign to her conductor. As soon as they reached Damascus, the latter left the slave and the letter with the chief chamberlain of the palace, took a receipt, and returned to Kufa.

Next morning the khalifat entered the harem and told his wife and sister of the arrival of the new slave, saying: "The governor of Kufa has sent her as a present; he informs me that he bought her from certain merchants and that she is a king's daughter whom they abducted in some far country." "Allah increase your joy!" answered his wife. "What is her name? Is she brown or white?" asked his sister. "I have not yet seen her," said the khalifat.

The king's sister, whose name was Zahia, hastened to the apartment where the girl was and found her bent half-unconscious in an attitude of dejection, her face burnt by the sun and glistening with tears. Being of a tender heart, she leaned over the child, saying: "Why do you weep, my sister? Do you not know that you will be safe here and that life will be easy for you? What better fate could you have hoped for than

that which brought you to the Commander of the Faithful?" Happy-Fair raised her eyes, saying: "My mistress, since this is the palace of the Commander of the Faithful, what city am I in?" "In Damascus; did you not know that?" answered Zahia. "Did not the merchant tell you that he had sold you to be a gift to the khalifat Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan? You are now the property of my brother the king, so dry your eyes and tell me your name." "O my mistress, in my own country I am called Happy-Fair," answered the young woman through her sobs.

Just as she was speaking the khalifat entered and, coming towards her with a kind smile, sat down by her side, saying: "Lift your veil, young girl." But instead of doing so, Happy-Fair drew her robe round her with a trembling hand. The king did not wish to take offence at so strange an action, so he said to his sister: "I leave this child to your charge and hope that in a few days you will have made her accustomed to you and persuaded her to be less timid." He threw a glance at Happy-Fair and could see nothing of her save the joints of her tender wrists; yet he loved her hotly, for wrists so beautiful had need belong to an exquisite body. But though he was inflamed with passion he departed.

Zahia led Happy-Fair to the palace hammam and, after she had bathed, dressed her in delightful robes and sprinkled pearls and diamonds among her hair. All that day she kept company with her, but the girl, being confused by her attentions, continued to weep and would not tell her the cause of her weeping. The poor captive imagined that nothing she could say would change her destiny and therefore consumed her own grief day and night, until she fell seriously ill and the best medical science of Damascus despaired of her life.

Happy-Handsome, the son of Spring, returned on that first evening to his house and threw himself on the diwan, calling: "O Happy-Fair!" As no one answered, he sprang to his feet and called a second time: "O Happy-Fair!" No one dared enter to him, for all the slaves had hidden; so he hurried to his mother and, finding her sitting thoughtful and dejected with her chin in her hand, asked anxiously: "Where is Happy-Fair?"

His mother burst into tears, stammering: "Allah protect us, my child! Happy-Fair asked my permission to go out with the old lady to visit some sacred wali, who performs miracles; and she has not yet returned. O my son, my heart has never been at ease since that hag came into our house. Our door-keeper, the good old man who brought us all up, never could regard her without suspicion; and I myself have always had a presentiment that she would bring misfortune upon us with her over-long prayers and side-long glances." Happy-Handsome interrupted his mother, saying: "When exactly did she go out?" "Early this morning, soon after you left for the market," she answered, and the youth cried: "You see what comes of changing our habits and giving liberty to women when they do not know how to use it! Oh, why did you let her go out? Who knows, she may have lost herself, or fallen into the water, or stood under some minaret while it was falling. I shall go now to the governor and make him undertake an immediate search."

Beside himself with grief, Happy-Handsome ran to the palace and was received without delay, because of the respect in which his father was held by the governor. Neglecting all formal greeting, he cried: "My slave disappeared from my house this morning,

in company of an old woman to whom we had given lodging. I pray you to help me find her." The governor adopted a tone of the greatest interest, and answered: "Certainly, certainly, my dear boy; there is nothing that I would not do for the son of so worthy a father. Go to my chief of police and tell him your trouble; he is a clever and experienced man who is certain to be able to find your slave in a few days."

Happy-Handsome hastened into the presence of the chief of police, and said: "The governor sent me to you, that you may find a slave who has disappeared from my house." The chief of police, who was sitting upon his carpet with his left leg crossed over his right, blew through his mouth two or three times, and then asked: "With whom did she go away?" "With an old woman whose distinguishing marks are such and such," answered Happy-Handsome. "She is dressed in drugget and has a large chaplet of many beads about her neck." Then said the chief of police: "As Allah lives, tell me where the old woman is and I will find your slave for you." "But how do I know where the old woman is?" cried the distracted youth. "Would I come here if I knew?" The chief of police changed the position of his legs, crossing the right over the left, and said: "My son, only Allah can search out the invisible!" "By the Prophet!" cried Happy-Handsome angrily, "I shall hold you responsible; if necessary I shall tell the governor, even the khalifat, of the attitude which you adopt." "You can do what seems good to you," answered the other. "I never learned sorcery, therefore I cannot find out hidden things."

The unhappy son of Spring returned to the governor saying: "I went to the chief of police and such and such happened." "Impossible!" exclaimed the

official. "You there, my guards! Bring that son of a dog to me at once!" When the chief of police appeared before him, he said: "I order you to make the very closest search for the slave of this young man, who is the son of the merchant Spring. Send horsemen in all directions, set off yourself and look everywhere; you must find her at any cost." At the same time he gave the man a wink which signified: "Do not stir in this matter," and then turned to Happy-Handsome, saying: "My son, I trust that it will be through me alone that you get back your slave. If by any extraordinary chance she is not found, I myself will give you ten virgins exactly as old as the houris, with firm breasts and buttocks like stone cubes. Also I shall make this chief of police give you ten of his slaves as virgin as my eye. Calm yourself now, and remember that Destiny will ever render to you what is intended for you, and, on the other hand, that you will never receive anything which was not destined for you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Happy-Handsome took leave of the governor and returned despairing to his house, after wandering about the city all night in search of Happy-Fair. In the morning he had to take to his bed with a weakness and fever which increased day after day in measure as his faith in the researches decreed by the governor

lessened. The doctors who were consulted decided that there was no cure of him except the return of his wife.

About this time there arrived in the city of Kufa a Persian, who was a past master in the art of medicine, chemistry, the science of the stars, and sand divination. Called by the merchant Spring to the bedside of his son with many honourable promises and compliments, this learned man felt the boy's pulse, looked in his face, and then turned with a smile to the merchant Spring, saying: "The illness lies in his heart." "As Allah lives, you speak truly!" cried the merchant; and the sage continued: "And it is caused by the disappearance of some loved one. I will soon tell you, by the aid of my mysterious powers, the place in which this person is to be found."

With that the Persian squatted on the floor and sprinkled a packet of sand in front of him; in the middle of the sand he placed five white pebbles and three black pebbles, two sticks and a tiger's claw; these he arranged on one plane, on two planes, then on three planes; and, after murmuring some words in the Persian tongue, said: "All you who hear me, know that the person is to be found at Bassora. . . . No, no, these three rivers mislead me; she is to be found at Damascus, in the king's palace, and she is in the same state of debility as this young man."

"What must we do, O venerable doctor?" cried the merchant. "Help us in this, and you will have no cause to complain that avarice abides here. As Allah lives, I will give you enough money to live opulently for three lives." "Calm your spirits," answered the Persian, "let quiet eyelids cover quiet eyes. I undertake to bring these two young people together; the matter is much easier than you suppose. Give me

four thousand dinars." The merchant undid his belt and handed five thousand to the Persian, who said: "Now that I have enough for all expenses, I will set out immediately for Damascus and take your son with me. If Allah wills, we shall return with the one he loves." Then he turned to the boy on the bed, and said: "O honourable son of the merchant Spring, what is your name?" "Happy-Handsome," replied the other; and the sage continued: "Well then, Happy-Handsome, rise up and let your soul be at peace; for you may look upon your slave as already returned to you." The humours of the youth were stirred by the good influence of the doctor, so that he sat up on the bed, while the other went on: "Be of good cheer; eat, drink, and sleep. In a week, when your strength has returned, I will come back for you and take you with me." With that he took leave of father and son and went away to make preparations for the journey.

The merchant gave his son five thousand dinars, bought him camels which he charged with rich merchandise and pleasantly coloured Kufa silks; and provided him with horses. At the end of a week, the boy had become well enough to travel; so he said farewell to his father and mother, to Prosperity and the old door-keeper, and set out with the Persian sage, followed by the prayers of the whole household.

You must know that by this time Happy-Handsome had reached the perfection of adolescence; seventeen years had left their light touches on the carnation of his cheeks in a powder of down, so that all who beheld him stopped suddenly short with a feeling of ecstasy. It was not long before the Persian doctor came under the boy's delicious spell and loved him with all his heart; therefore he deprived himself of any luxury

upon the journey which might add to his companion's comfort, and took great pleasure when the boy was pleased.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

Under these conditions the journey passed pleasantly and the two travellers arrived in health and safety at Damascus. At once the Persian sage went with Happy-Handsome to the principal market and hired a large shop, which he caused to be redecorated and fitted with velvet-covered shelves. On these he arranged with careful art his precious flasks, his salves, his balms, his powders, his syrups held in crystal, his fine theriacs contained in pure gold, his pots of Persian porcelain which shone with a glaze of silver and held to ripen old pomades made up of the sap of three hundred rare kinds of herb. Among the greater jars, retorts, and alembics, he gave a place of honour to his golden astrolabe.

He dressed himself in the full robes of his profession and bound his head with a turban of seven folds. Then he clothed Happy-Handsome in a blue silk shirt with a cashmere jacket and fastened about his wrist a rose silk apron worked with threads of gold; that he might stand by his side as an assistant, fill prescriptions, pound drugs in the mortar, make little bags of scent, and write magic cures to his dictation. When all was ready, he said to the youth: "From this mo-

ment you must call me father and I will call you son, as we do not wish the inhabitants of Damascus to think that we are at all unusual." As soon as the shop was open the people crowded to it, some with diseases, some to see for themselves the beauty of the assistant; and all were stricken with a happy surprise to hear the boy converse with the sage in the Persian tongue, which seemed to them beautiful enough on such lips. But the thing which caused the greatest amazement throughout the city was the way in which the wise man could diagnose diseases.

He would look at the whites of the patient's eyes for a few moments and then hold out a great crystal bowl towards him, saying: "Piss!" The sick man would piss in the bowl and the Persian lifting it to the height of his eyes, would say, after a moment's examination: "You have such and such a disease." The patient never failed to cry: "As Allah lives that is so!" and then all who were by would lift their arms, crying: "Ya Allah, what a prodigy of learning! We have never heard tell of the like!"

With such a beginning it is hardly to be wondered at that the fame of the Persian came in a few days to the ears of the khalifat and his sister Zahia. One day, as the sage was sitting in his shop dictating a prescription to Happy-Handsome who stood pen in hand by his side, a noble looking old woman, mounted upon an ass whose saddle was of red brocade starred with diamonds, stopped at the door, knotted the bridle of her mount to the copper ring on the pommel and signed to the physician to help her dismount. He rose quickly and, taking her hand, helped her from the ass and led her into the shop, where he begged her be seated, while Happy-Handsome brought

forward a cushion with one of his discreetest smiles.

The old woman took a flask filled with urine from the folds of her robe and handed it to the doctor, saying: "Is it not you, venerable old man, who have come from Irak to perform wonderful cures in our city of Damascus?" "Your slave is even such as you describe," answered the sage; and the old woman continued: "None is a slave save of Allah! Sublime master of the sciences, this flask contains you know what; it was made by the virgin favourite of our lord, the Commander of the Faithful. Our own doctors could not determine the illness which has kept her to her bed since the first day of her arrival at the palace; so lady Zahia, sister of the king, has sent you this that you may discover the disease." "Mistress," answered the old man, "I must know the name of this patient, for my proper calculation of an auspicious hour for her to drink my cures." "Her name is Happy-Fair," answered the royal messenger.

The sage began to trace row after row of figures on a piece of paper which he held in his hand, some in red ink, others in green ink; then he added up the red figures and the green figures and did something with the totals, saying: "Mistress, I have discovered the disease. It goes by the name of Trembling of the Fans of the Heart." "As Allah lives, that is so!" cried the woman, "for we can hear the fans trembling in her heart." "Before I can prescribe for her," continued the physician, "I must know the land from which she comes. That is very important, for I must needs determine the lightness or heaviness of the air in its influence upon the fans. Also that I may ascertain the state of preservation of those delicate organs, I must know how long she has been in Damascus and her exact age." "It appears that she was brought

up in Kufa, a city of Irak," replied the woman. "She is sixteen years of age, I know, for she told me that she was born in the year of the fire of Kufa market. She has only been a few weeks in Damascus."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

The Persian doctor turned to Happy-Handsome whose heart was beating like a mill, and said: "Prepare such and such remedies, after article seven of the formula of bin Sina."

The woman looked at the boy who was thus addressed: "As Allah lives, my child, she who is ill is very like you; her face is beautiful and agreeable in the same way as yours. . . . Tell me, noble Persian, is this your son or your slave." "My son and your slave," answered the sage, and the old woman, charmed with this flattery, said: "In truth, I do not know which to admire more, your science or your son." She went on conversing with the physician while Happy-Handsome put up the cures in small packets and arranged these in a box, into which he also slipped a note telling Happy-Fair of his arrival in Damascus. He sealed the box and wrote his name and address on the cover in Kufic character, which the people of Damascus could not read and his dear slave could. The old woman took the box, placed ten dinars of gold upon the doctor's desk, and, bidding farewell to this obliging couple, hurried to the palace.

Finding the eyes of the sick girl half-shut and moistened at the corners with tears, she went up to her, saying: "Dear child, may these cures do you as much good as he who prepared them gave me pleasure! He is a youth as fair as an angel and the shop is a place of delights. Here is the box." Happy-Fair, not wishing to offend the old woman, stretched out her hand for the box and threw a careless glance upon the cover; suddenly all the colour of her cheeks changed, for she saw these words traced in Kufic character: "I am Happy-Handsome, son of the Merchant Spring at Kufa." Calling together all her strength so as not to faint or betray herself, she said smiling: "What like was this fair youth of yours?" "He is such a mingling of all delights," said the other, "that I could not possibly describe him. He has eyes! He has eyebrows! Ya Allah! But the very soul melts at a beauty-spot on the left corner of his mouth and a dimple which appears on his right cheek when he smiles."

At this description Happy-Fair recognised her dear lover beyond any doubt. "Since that is so, may his face be a good augury for my cure," she said. She took the contents of the packets and swallowed them immediately; as she did so, she saw the note, opened it and read it. Straightway she jumped to the bottom of her bed, crying: "Good mother, I feel that I am cured! These drugs are miraculous! O happy day!" "As Allah lives, this comes by His blessing," exclaimed the old woman, and Happy-Fair continued: "I pray you to bring me something to eat and drink, for I am dying of hunger after my thirty days' fast."

The old woman served Happy-Fair with trays of roast meats, fruits, and drinks, and then hurried to the khalifat to tell him that his young slave had been

cured by the unheard-of learning of the Persian sage. "Carry him at once these thousand dinars," said the khalifat, and the old woman hastened to do as she was told. First she returned to Happy-Fair, who gave her a present for the doctor in a sealed box, and then ran to the shop, where she gave the thousand dinars to the sage and the box to Happy-Handsome. The youth opened his present and saw within it a letter which described the abduction of his beloved by order of the governor of Kufa and her transmission to the khalifat; so that he burst out sobbing and fell into a swoon.

"Why does your son weep and faint?" asked the old woman, and the Persian replied: "How could it be otherwise, since the slave Happy-Fair, whom I have cured, belongs to this boy whom you deem my son, but who is no other than the son of the illustrious merchant Spring of Kufa? We came to Damascus for the sole purpose of looking for the young girl, who was raped from her home one day by a wicked old woman with treacherous eyes. Now, dear mother, we place our dearest hopes in your benevolence and beg that you will help us to recover this most precious of possessions. . . . As an earnest of our thanks, here are the thousand dinars which the khalifat sent to me. You can count on further gratitude in the future."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

The good old woman helped the sage to recover Happy-Handsome, saying: "You may count on my

good will and devotion." Without further delay she left the shop and returned to Happy-Fair, whom she found brilliant with joy and health. "My daughter," she said smiling, "why did you not trust your mother from the beginning? I would never have blamed you for shedding so many tears at being separated from that delightful Happy-Handsome." Seeing the girl's surprise, she hastened to add: "My child, you can rely absolutely on my discretion and maternal good will towards you. I swear to return you to your lover, even if I risk my life in doing so. Put aside all anxiety and let the old woman act according to her cunning."

She left Happy-Fair, who kissed her hands and wetted them with tears of joy; and, after making up a packet of female garments, jewellery, and articles of toilet, went again to the sage's shop and signed to Happy-Handsome to go apart with her. The youth led her behind a curtain at the back of the shop and heartily approved the plan which she unfolded to him.

She helped him to dress as a woman, lengthened his eyes with kohl and increased the mole on his cheek with a black pigment; then she put bracelets upon his wrists and jewels among his hair beneath its Mosul veil. She cast a last glance upon her handiwork and found the boy more ravishing than all the women of the palace put together. "Blessed be Allah in His works!" she said. "Now you must walk as a young virgin walks, with little steps, bringing the right hip forward and the left hip back, and making small learned wriggles with your bottom. Practise awhile before we go forth."

Happy-Handsome practised these things in the shop and acquitted himself so well that the old woman cried: "As Allah lives, women need not be so proud in future; the bottom moves marvellously and the hips

superbly! Now, that nothing shall be lacking, you must give your face a more languorous expression, thrusting your neck a little forward and looking out of the corners of your eyes. There, that is perfect; now you can follow me."

When they got to the door of the harem, the chief eunuch stepped forward, saying: "No stranger may enter without a special order from the Commander of the Faithful. Either retire with this girl or go in without her." "What has become of your wisdom, O crown of eunuchs? You, who are ever urbanity itself, now adopt a tone which ill matches with your delightful face. O nobly mannered man, this slave is the property of Lady Zahia, the sister of our khalifat, and if she hears of your lack of courtesy towards her favourite, I am afraid she will have you decapitated, or at least thrown from office. I regret to have to confess that it will be your own fault." Then, turning to Happy-Handsome, she said: "Come, good slave, forget the rudeness of our worthy master, and above all say nothing about it to your mistress. Come!" She took him by the hand and led him through the door, while he thrust his head forward from left to right in an enticing manner, and threw an eye-smile to the chief eunuch who shook his head and let them pass.

As soon as they were in the court of the harem, the old woman said to Happy-Handsome: "My son, we have reserved a room for you in the harem itself and from this point you must go to it alone. The way is quite simple; go through that door, take the gallery in front of you, turn to the left, then to the right, then again to the right, count five doors and open the sixth; that will be your room; and I will send Happy-Fair to join you there. After you have met, I will

myself help you to leave the palace without being noticed by the guards or eunuchs."

Happy-Handsome entered the gallery and, in his exaltation, forgot which hand was which; he turned to the right, then to the left, into a parallel corridor and entered the door of the sixth chamber which he found.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

He found himself in a lofty hall, topped by a narrow dome whose interior was ornamented by verses written out in gold with a thousand interlacing lines. The walls were covered with rose silk, the windows curtained with gauze, and the floor spread with immense carpets of kashmir. Cups of fruit were set on stools, and on the carpets themselves were ranged platters covered with silk but teeming with suggestion, both in form and odour, that here were famous pastries, meat for the tenderest throats, such as only the art of Damascus can encompass with entire sympathy.

Now Happy-Handsome was far from suspecting that this hall held unknown powers for him.

The only visible furnishing was a velvet-covered throne, so the youth, who did not dare to retreat in case he should be found wandering about the corridors, seated himself on this throne and waited his destiny.

He had not been there long before a noise of silks reached his ears and he saw a young woman with a royal look enter by one of the side doors. She was dressed only in house garments, so that her face and hair might be seen; and was followed by a delicious little slave with naked feet, who was crowned with flowers and carried a lute of sycamore-wood in her hand. This woman was none other than the lady Zahia, own sister to the Commander of the Faithful.

When she saw a veiled woman sitting upon the throne, she went towards her softly, saying: "Who are you, stranger? And why do you sit thus veiled in the harem where no unlawful eye may see you?" Happy-Handsome rose precipitately to his feet and, as he dared not speak, pretended to be dumb. "Why do you not answer, girl with beautiful eyes?" asked Zahia. "If you are by any chance some slave sent back from the palace by my brother, tell me so and I will intercede for you. He refuses me nothing." Happy-Handsome remained silent; so Zahia, thinking that the unknown would not speak in the presence of the little slave who was regarding the pair of them with round eyes, said to the child: "Go behind the door, my pretty one, and do not let anyone enter." When the little girl had left them, she went closer to Happy-Handsome, who was trying to wrap himself more and more in his large veil, saying: "Tell me who you are, dear girl, and why you came to this hall which is reserved for myself and my brother. You may speak freely, for I find you charming. Your eyes are delightful; I think you are perfectly beautiful, little one." With that, Zahia, who was partial to white delicate virgins, drew the veiled figure towards her by the waist and, raising one hand to caress the breast, undid the robe with the other. You can picture

her stupefaction when she found the breast of the young girl as flat as a boy's. First she recoiled and then, returning, wished to lift up the robe altogether and look more closely into the matter.

Seeing this movement, Happy-Handsome judged it more prudent to speak; so he carried Zahia's hand to his lips, saying: "Mistress, I throw myself upon your kindness and beg for your protection." "I grant it already; speak on," said Zahia; and the youth continued: "Dear mistress, I am not a girl; I am Happy-Handsome, son of the merchant Spring at Kufa. I came here at the risk of my life to see my wife again. Happy-Fair, a slave stolen by the governor of Kufa and sent as a present to the Commander of the Faithful. I conjure you by the life of the Prophet, compassionate lady, to pity your two slaves." With that he burst into tears.

Zahia straightway called the little slave, saying: "Run as fast as you can, pretty one, to Happy-Fair's apartments and tell her that I wish her to come to me."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

Then she turned to Happy-Handsome, saying: "Be of good cheer, O youth, I have in store for you nothing but happiness."

Now, while all this had been happening, the good old woman had gone to Happy-Fair, saying: "Follow

me quickly, my child, for your beloved is in the room which I reserved for him." She led her, pale with emotion, to the place where she supposed Happy-Handsome to be, and the two were terrified not to find him. "He must be wandering about the corridors," said the old woman. "Return, my child, to your own apartments, while I go to look for him."

Just as Happy-Fair had regained her room in a state of great anxiety, the little slave came in, saying that Princess Zahia wished to speak to her. Poor Happy-Fair thought that she was indeed lost and her husband with her, and was hardly able to follow the delightful little girl with naked feet.

As soon as she came into the hall, the king's sister ran to her smiling and led her by the hand to Happy-Handsome, saying to both of them: "Here is happiness!" The two young people recognised each other and fell fainting into the arms which each stretched to the other.

Zahia and the little girl sprinkled their faces with rose-water and, when they came to themselves, left them alone together. She returned in an hour and found them sitting side by side in each other's arms, their happy cheeks moistened by tears of joy and gratitude. "Now we must drink together," she said, "to celebrate your re-union and that your happiness may last for ever." The laughing little one filled cups with rare wine and, as they drank, Zahia said: "How you love each other, my children! Surely you must know admirable songs of love and lovers. Take this lute and sing me something, I beg. Let me hear the soul of its melodious wood!" Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair kissed the princess's hand and sang these wonderful alternate stanzas:

I bring light flowers
Under my veil of Kufa silk
And fruits still powdered with their gold.

All the gold of Sudan shines upon you,
O well-belov'd,
Because the sun has not ceased to kiss you.
The velvet of Damascus
Is woven from your past glances.

I come to you in the cool of the evening,
The light air
Stirs the blue veil of the night;
There is a murmur of leaves and waters.

You are here,
Gazelle of nights:
My spirit dips towards your eyes
As a white bird to the sea.

Come near and take these roses;
I slip like a flower
From the bud of my green silks.
I am naked for you.

Beloved!

I am here,
A young moon stealing to you through the trees,
A summer sea
Flown over by quick rejoicing birds.

Hardly had the last notes of this song died away upon the lips of Happy-Fair, when the curtains parted and the khalifat himself stepped into the hall. All three sprang to their feet and kissed the earth between his hands. He smiled at them and sat down among them, calling to the little slave to bring wine. "We

must drink together," said he, "to celebrate the recovery of Happy-Fair." Then lifting his cup with a "For love of your eyes, my dear?" he drank slowly. As he put down his cup he noticed the veiled slave, and turned to his sister, saying: "Who is this girl whose light veil promises so much beauty?" "She is a friend who cannot bear to be separated from Happy-Fair," answered Zahia. "They can neither eat nor drink unless they are together."

The khalifat parted the youth's veil, starting back before the beauty of him; for Happy-Handsome had no hair upon his cheeks, but there was a very light down upon them which gave an adorable texture to their whiteness: also you must not forget the beauty spot which smiled upon his chin.

"As Allah lives, my sister," cried the delighted sultan, "henceforth I take this new slave as a concubine and reserve for her, as for Happy-Fair, an apartment worthy of her beauty and a following equal to that of a lawful wife." "Indeed, my brother," answered Zahia, "she is a morsel worthy of you . . . It just occurs to me that I would like to tell you a tale which I read in a book written by one of our wise men." "What tale is that?" asked the khalifat; and the lady Zahia said . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

"O Commander of the Faithful, there was once in the city of Kufa a youth named Happy-Handsome,

son of Spring, who had a slave to wife. They loved each other, for they had been brought up together from the same cradle and had possessed each other at the moment of puberty. For years they were happy together until an evil day came to separate them. A wicked old woman, acting as the hot hand of Destiny, stole the slave and delivered her to the governor of the city, who sent her as a present to the king of that time.

"The son of Spring took no rest after she had gone, until he had followed her up and found her in the very harem of the king's palace. Just as the two were congratulating each other and shedding tears of joy, the king surprised them together and, without waiting to discover the full meaning of what he saw, furiously cut off both their heads.

"The sage who wrote this tale gives no judgment upon its ending; so I beg you to tell me your opinion of the act of this king and whether you would have done the same in his place."

The sultan Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan answered without a moment's hesitation: "The king should not have acted so precipitately; he should have pardoned the two young people for three reasons: first, because they had long and truly loved each other; second, because they were his guests at that time; and third, because a king should always act prudently and circumspectly. I conclude, therefore, that the action of the king was unworthy of his rank."

The lady Zahia threw herself before her brother's knees, crying: "O Prince of Believers, without knowing it, you have already prejudged yourself. I conjure you, by the sacred memory of our noble ancestors and our august father, to abide by that justice in the case which I put before you." "Rise, my sister; you may

speak without fear," answered the surprised khalifat; so Zahia rose and, making the two young people stand up also, said to her brother: "My lord, this beautiful and charming girl is, beneath her veil, none other than that young man Happy-Handsome, the son of Spring. Happy-Fair was brought up with him and became his wife; her ravisher was even bin Yusuf Al-Sakafi, governor of Kufa. He lied when he said in his letter that he had bought her for ten thousand dinars. I demand his punishment and the pardon of these most excusable children. Be good to them, remembering that they are your guests, sheltered by your own sacred shadow."

"It is not my custom to go back on the spoken word," said the khalifat. "Tell me, Happy-Fair, is this in truth your master, Happy-Handsome?" "Even as my lord says," she answered; and the khalifat cried: "I give you back to one another."

Then he looked at Happy-Handsome, saying: "I should be interested to learn how you succeeded in reaching this place, and how you knew that your wife was in my palace." "Commander of the Faithful," replied Happy-Handsome, "listen but for a few minutes, and I will tell you all the tale." With that he related the whole adventure to the khalifat without omitting a single detail.

The king was astonished and, sending for the Persian sage, named him his own physician and loaded him with honours. He kept Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair for seven days and seven nights of festivity and rejoicing in the palace and then sent them back to Kufa with many presents. He debased the governor of that city and named, in his stead, the merchant Spring, father of Happy-Handsome. All con-

cerned in this tale lived at the height of happiness throughout long and fortunate lives.

When Shahrazade fell silent, King Shahryar exclaimed: "O Shahrazade, the tale has pleased me and the verses in it have inspired me. But I was a little surprised not to find any details of that other way of love."

Shahrazade smiled lightly, saying: "O auspicious king, you will find those details in the Tale of Beauty-Spot, which I will tell you if you still continue to be troubled by your insomnia." "What is that you say, O Shahrazade?" cried King Shahryar. "As Allah lives, I would rather die of insomnia than not hear the Tale of Beauty-Spot. Being at once."

But at that moment Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and postponed her tale.

So When
The Two-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come

She said:

THE TALE OF BEAUTY-SPOT

It is related, O auspicious King, that there was once, in Cairo, a venerable old man who held the office of syndic among the merchants of the city; all the market respected him for his honesty, his grave politeness, his thoughtful language, his wealth, and the number of his slaves. His name was Shamseddin.

One Friday, before the prayer, he went first to the hammam and then to a barber's shop, where he had his moustaches cut to the border of the upper lip and

his head carefully shaved. He took the mirror which the barber offered him and, after having recited the act of faith against pride, looked within it. Sadly he considered the white hairs of his beard, which were now more numerous than the black, and noticed that at length the black were indeed hard to find. "A white beard is a sign of age," he thought to himself, "and age is an advertisement of death. Poor Shamseddin! Here you are at the door of the tomb and you have no children. You will be snuffed out like a candle and no more seen." Filled with these desolate thoughts, he made his prayer at the mosque and then returned to his house. His wife, who knew his usual hour of return and had prepared herself to receive him with bath, perfume, and careful depilation, ran to meet him with a smiling face, saying: "A happy evening attend you!"

Instead of returning his wife's wish, the syndic said sharply: "What talk is this of happy evenings? Is there any happiness left for me?" "The name of Allah be upon you and about you!" cried his astonished wife. "Why this gloom, what happiness do you lack, what is the cause of your sadness?" "You are," he answered. "Listen, woman: try to imagine my bitter pain when I go to the market every day and see the merchants sitting with two, three, or four little children by them, bright promises growing up in the sight of happy paternal eyes. They are proud of their issue, and I alone have not that consolation. Often I wish for death rather than such a life as this; and pray to Allah, who has called my fathers to His rest, to put a term to my sufferings."

"Do not think of such distressing things," answered his wife. "Come and do honour to the cloth which is spread for you." But the merchant cried: "As Allah

lives, I will neither eat nor drink and especially I will accept nothing at your hands. You are the sole cause of our sterility. Forty fruitless years have passed since our marriage and you have always forbidden me to take other wives, you even profited on the night of our wedding, by the weakness of my flesh, to make me swear never to know another woman. Also, worse and worse, you kept me to my oath which, when you saw your barrenness, you should at once have forgiven. I swear by Allah that I would rather cut off my right hand that ever lie with you or even kiss you. I see that it is wasted time to bother with you; I would as likely get children by talking to some wholly indifferent rock, as by having anything to do with such as you. You are a barren, stony field, a bottomless pit into which I have generously sown seed, only to have it all wasted."

His wife saw the light change to shadows before her eyes and cried, with the bitterest voice that anger could give her: "Scent your mouth before you speak, old cold one! Allah preserve me from all ugliness and false imputation! If you think that I am the backward one, undeceive yourself, old uncle. If you want to complain, complain of yourself and your manhood for, as Allah lives, you have the warmth of ice, and that which is within you is thin, clear and worthless."

These words somewhat shook the syndic in his conviction and, in a hesitating voice, he said: "Admitting that it is I who am sterile and worthless, as you say, can you by chance tell me where to buy a drug that will aid my condition?" "At the first druggist you come to," answered his wife, "you will find a mixture to restore the power and make men apt to get children upon their wives."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come

She said:

"As Allah lives," said the syndic, "tomorrow morning I shall go to a druggist and buy a little of this mixture."

As soon as the market was open next morning, the old man took a porcelain bowl and brought it to a druggist, saying: "Peace be with you!" "The morning is blessed which brings you for my first customer. What may I have the pleasure of selling you?" answered the man; and the syndic held out his bowl, saying: "I want an ounce of that mixture which restores fecundity."

Not knowing what to think, the druggist said to himself: "Our syndic is very solemn as a rule, but I think that he wishes to jest this morning, so I will answer him in his own vein"; then aloud: "As Allah lives, I had plenty of it yesterday, but it is so popular that today my provision has run out. You had better go to my neighbour."

The syndic went to a second druggist, then to a third, and finally to all in the market. Each one gave him the same answer, laughing behind his hand the while.

Disappointed in his search, the old man returned to his shop and sat down to dream disgustedly upon life. As he sat in his black humour, there alighted before his door the sheikh of the brokers, whose name was Sesame. He was a phenomenal hashish eater, a

drunkard, a user of opium, a model of debauchery for all the lowest in the market; but he respected Shamseddin and never passed his shop without bowing to the ground with polished words of compliment. This morning he saw that the syndic answered all his salutations with bad grace, so he said: "What disaster has so troubled your spirit, O venerable syndic?" "Come, good Sesame," answered the other, "sit down by my side and listen to me; you will see if I have good cause to be afflicted or no. I have been married for forty years and have not had so much as a sniff of a child. Now they tell me that I am the cause of this lack. I have been to every druggist in the market for a mixture to correct these things, but not one of them has it. I am very unhappy, because I cannot find anything to give a proper density to this most important humour of my body."

Instead of being astonished at what the syndic said or laughing at him, the broker Sesame stretched out his hand, palm upwards, saying: "Give me a dinar and your bowl and I will do the business myself." "By Allah, is that possible?" answered the syndic, "I swear by the life of the Prophet that your fortune is made if you succeed. Here, to begin with, are two dinars instead of one." And he handed two gold pieces and the bowl to Sesame.

On this occasion that creature of fabulous debauch showed himself more learned in medicine than all the druggists of the market. He bought what he needed and set himself to prepare the following mixture:

He took two ounces of Chinese cubebs, one ounce of fat extract of Ionian hemp, one ounce of fresh caryophyle, one ounce of red cinnamon from Serendib, ten drachms of white Malabar cardamoms, five of

Indian ginger, five of white pepper, five of pimento from the isles, one ounce of the berries of Indian star-anise, and half an ounce of mountain thyme. These he mixed cunningly, after having pounded and sieved them; he added pure honey until the whole became a thick paste; then he mingled five grains of musk and an ounce of pounded fish roe with the rest. Finally he added a little concentrated rose-water and put all in the bowl.

After this work was completed, he carried the bowl to Shamseddin, saying: "Here is a sovereign mixture which will temper your humours and give a proper density to any balsam when it is become too thin. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Sesame continued: "You must eat this paste two hours before the necessary time; but, for three days before that, you must eat nothing save roast pigeons excessively seasoned with spice, male fish with their cream complete, and lightly fried ram's sweetbreads. If after all that you do not have the power of an elephant and get the very foundations of your house with child, you can cut off my beard and spit in my face." With these words he went away.

"Surely," thought the syndic, "Sesame, whose whole life is one riot of lewdness, ought to know all about these tempering medicines. I will put my trust in Allah and in him." He at once returned home and

made it up with his wife; and as they both loved each other, both apologised for their passing anger and told each other how sad it had been to stay estranged for a whole night.

Shamseddin scrupulously followed Sesame's diet for three days and then ate the paste, which he found delicious. Soon he noticed that his blood was boiling as it had when he was a boy and made bets on certain matters with lads of his own age. He went to his wife and asked her favour. She met him halfway and they were both astonished at the result of Sesame's prescription. Shamseddin was more like a young buck than a venerable syndic. That night the syndic's wife well and truly conceived.

Her pregnancy followed a normal course and, at the end of nine months to a day, she underwent a happy but frightfully difficult labour; for the child, when it was born, was as big as if it was already one year old. After the usual invocations, the midwife declared that never before had she seen so big and beautiful a boy; nor is that to be wondered at when we consider the excellent paste.

The midwife washed the child while she invoked the names of Allah, Muhamad, and Ali, and whispered the act of Faith into the baby's ear; then she swaddled him and returned him to the mother, who gave him the breast until he fell asleep. The old woman stayed by the wife for three days to see that all went well, and at the end of that time, the usual sweetmeats were distributed among the neighbours.

On the seventh day salt was thrown into the room and then the syndic entered to congratulate his wife. "Where is Allah's gift?" he asked, and she held out the child, so that Shamseddin marvelled at the beauty

of his son, who had the figure of a full year and a face brighter than the rising moon. "What would you like to call him?" he asked, and the wife replied: "If it had been a girl, I would have found a name; but as it is a boy you have the right of choice."

Just at that moment one of the girl slaves, who was swathing the infant, burst into tears of passionate pleasure on seeing a fair brown mole, like a grain of musk, which lay bright upon the small left thigh. Because of this discovery and also because his son had on both cheeks two much smaller beauty spots of velvet blackness, the good syndic cried "We will call him Aladdin Beauty-Spot!"

So the boy was called Aladdin Beauty-Spot, but soon this name was found too long and he was called simply Beauty-Spot. For four years he was given the breast by two nurses and by his mother, so that he became as strong as a young lion, while the white of him remained the white of jasmin and the rose the rose of rose. He was so handsome that all the little girls of the neighbourhood adored him to idolatry; he accepted their homage, but would never allow himself to be kissed by one of them, scratching them cruelly when they came too close; so the little girls, and even the big girls, used to take advantage of his sleep to cover him with kisses and rejoice in his fresh beauty.

When his father and mother saw how much Beauty-Spot was admired and petted, they feared the evil eye for him and resolved to protect him from its malign influence. They did not act like so many other parents, who leave their baby's faces to be covered by flies and filth so that they shall seem less beautiful; but at once shut their child in a cellar, built below the house, and had him brought up away from every indiscreet eye. Beauty-Spot grew without anyone

knowing about him, though he was surrounded by the incessant care of slaves and eunuchs. When he became older he was given learned masters, who taught him fair writing, the Koran, and many sciences. Though he soon became as learned as he was handsome and strong, his parents resolved not to let him leave the cellar until his beard sprouted.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

One day a slave, who had brought Beauty-Spot his meal, forgot to shut the cellar door; seeing this opening, which he had never noticed before owing to the great size of the cellar and to the fact that it had many curtains and hangings, the boy hastened through it and ran upstairs into the presence of his mother, who was surrounded by certain high-born women, come upon a visit.

At that time Beauty-Spot was a fair child of fourteen, as handsome as a drunken angel; his cheeks were downed like fruit and the twin moles shone on either side of his mouth (to say nothing of the one which might not be seen). When the women saw this unknown youth bound into their midst, they veiled their faces in fright and said to the wife of Shamseddin: "By Allah, what shame is this, that you allow a strange young man to see us? Do you not know that modesty is one of the essential dogmas of faith?"

Beauty-Spot's mother answered "Call on the name

of Allah! O guests, this is my dearly-loved son, the fruit of my bowels, offspring of the syndic of the merchants of Cairo. He has been brought up at the breasts of nurses with a generous milk, in the arms of beautiful slaves, on the shoulders of chosen virgins, in the purest and noblest laps; he is his mother's eye and his father's pride; he is Beauty-Spot! Call on the name of Allah, O my guests."

"The name of Allah be upon him and about him!" answered the emirs' and rich merchants' wives. "But tell us why you have never shown your son to us before?"

Shamseddin's wife rose and, kissing her son upon the eyes, sent him away that he might no longer embarrass her friends; then she said: "His father has had him brought up in the cellar of our house to protect him from the evil eye, and is determined not to show him until his beard sprouts in case his beauty should attract danger and evil influences. His escape just now must be the fault of some eunuch who forgot to close the door." Her guests congratulated the syndic's wife on the beauty of her son and called down the blessings of Allah upon his head before they left.

Beauty-Spot returned to his mother and, seeing the slaves harnessing a mule, asked her what the animal was for. "To fetch your father from the market," she said; and he continued "What is my father's business?" "My dear," she replied, "your father is a great merchant and syndic of all the other merchants in Cairo. He furnishes the sultan of Arabia and all the Mussulman kings. To give you an idea of his importance: buyers never go to him direct, save for transactions which involve over a thousand dinars; if a trivial nine hundred and ninety-nine dinars are in question, people go to your father's underlings and

not to himself. No merchandise can go in or out of Cairo without your father being told of it and consulted about it. Allah has given your father incalculable riches, my child; therefore be grateful to Him."

"I thank Him that He created me the son of a syndic," answered Beauty-Spot, "but I do not want to pass all my life shut away from my fellow men; tomorrow I will go to the market with my father." "May Allah hear you, my son," answered his mother. "As soon as your father returns this evening, I will speak to him about it."

When Shamseddin came in, his wife told him all that had passed, adding: "It is really time that you took your son to the market with you." "O mother of Beauty-Spot," replied the syndic, "do you not know that the evil eye is a very real thing, not a subject for jests? Have you forgotten what happened to the sons of our neighbour so and so and our neighbor such and such and a host of others, killed by the evil eye? Half the graves of time are filled with victims of the evil eye."

"Father of Beauty-Spot," objected his wife, "every man carries his destiny about his neck and cannot escape it. What is written cannot be cancelled, and sons will follow their fathers through life and the doors of death. That which is today, tomorrow is not! How terrible it would be if our son were to suffer through your fault; for some day—after a long and entirely fortunate life, I hope—you will die and no one will recognize our boy as the legitimate heir to all your riches, since no one knows of his existence. The Treasury will take your goods and cheat your son out of his inheritance. If I called the old men as witnesses, they would only be able to say: 'We never heard of a son or daughter being born to the syndic Shamseddin.'"

These shrewd words made the syndic reflect; after a little while he answered: "As Allah lives, I think you are right! Tomorrow I will take Beauty-Spot with me and teach him the arts of buying and selling and all the secrets of my business." Turning to his son, who was jumping for joy, he continued: "I know you will be delighted to come with me, and that is very well; but you must remember that, in the market, one has to be very serious and keep one's eyes lowered modestly. I hope that you will remember to practise the wise precepts which your masters have taught you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

Next morning, Shamseddin took his son to the hammam and, after he had bathed, dressed him in a robe of very soft satin, the finest that he had in his shop and bound his brow with a light turban of striped material, sewn with delicate gold silk. They ate a morsel together and drank a glass of sherbert to refresh themselves before leaving the hammam; then the syndic mounted his white mule and took Beauty-Spot up behind him, who shone so fresh and fair that he would have seduced the angels themselves. They rode to the market among a group of slaves, who wore new dresses for the occasion; and all the merchants fell to marvelling and saying to each other: "Ya Allah! look at the boy! Surely that is the moon a fortnight old!"

Others added: "Who can the delicious child be? We have never seen him before."

As they were all exclaiming at the passage of the white mule, the broker Sesame passed also and perceived the boy. Now, owing to his excessive debauchery, to his fabulous consumption of hashish and opium, Sesame had completely lost his memory and had quite forgotten the cure which he had worked upon the syndic with his miraculous paste of male roe, musk, cubebs, and the rest.

Therefore, as soon as he saw his old friend accompanied by a youth, he grinned and began to make crapulous jokes to himself, and say to various of the merchants: "Look at the old man; is he not like a leek, white-haired but green in body?" With that he went from one to another, repeating his jests and epigrams until no one in the market doubted that the syndic Shamseddin had installed a young minion in his shop.

When this rumour came to the ears of the principal merchants, they formed an assembly of the oldest and most respected among them to judge the matter; and Sesame appeared before them, making wide gestures of indignation and saying: "We do not wish to have at our head as syndic a lewd old man, who rubs himself against young boys in public. I suggest that we abstain this morning from going to read before him the seven holy verses of the Fatihah, as is our custom; and that, during the day, we choose another syndic who is a little less partial to youth." The merchants found nothing to say against Sesame's plan, which was unanimously adopted.

When the worthy Shamseddin saw the hour pass on which the merchants and brokers usually came to recite before him the ritual verses of the Fatihah, or

opening of the Koran, he did not know what to make of this breach of tradition; and, seeing the dissolute Sesame watching him out of the corner of his eyes, beckoned him to approach. The broker had been waiting for this, so he stepped forward, moving slowly and negligently, casting knowing glances at the shop-keepers to right and left that he might be the centre of all eyes and be considered as the latest posted in this scandal.

As he leaned against the front of the shop, Shamseddin said to him: "How is it, my good Sesame, that the merchants and their chief have not come to recite their holy verses before me?" The broker answered with a cough: "Hm! Hm! I really could not say. There are rumours running about the market, rumours, just rumours. This I can tell you though: a party has been formed among the chief oldsters to deprive you of your office and elect another syndic."

The worthy merchant lost colour at this, but he asked calmly: "Can you tell me the reason for this decision?" Sesame winked and undulated his hips, saying: "Do not be coy with me, old friend; you ought to know better than anyone else. That boy in your shop now; I take it he is not there to kill the flies. Mind you, I strongly undertook your defence, I only among the whole of them: I told them that, if you had been a lover of boys, I should have been the first to know of it, because I always seem to make friends with those who have a taste for green fruit. I told them that the lad must be some relation to your wife or to one of your friends in Tantah, or Baghdad; but they turned against me and insisted on your replacement. Allah is great, old friend; and you have one

consolation: that truly delightful boy on whom I heartily congratulate you.

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

Shamseddin could no longer contain his indignation and interrupted Sesame, crying: "Be quiet, O most corrupt of evil livers! Do you not know that that is my son? Where is your memory, O hashish eater?" "Since when have you had a son?" asked Sesame. "Was he fourteen years carried in the belly of his mother?" "But, ridiculous Sesame," exclaimed the merchant, "do you not remember that you yourself prepared that miraculous paste for me fourteen years ago, which so renewed my strength and added to my vigour and liveliness? Working through its means, Allah gave me a son; but you never came to ask news of your prescription. I have brought the boy up in the great cellar of our house for fear of the evil eye and this is the first day that he has been out with me. I had meant to keep him from the sight of all until he could hold his beard in his fingers, but his mother persuaded me to liberate him and teach him my business . . . I am glad to have the opportunity of paying my debt to you, O Sesame: here are a thousand dinars for that paste of yours."

The broker no longer doubted the truth of Shamseddin's statement, so he hastened to the rest of the

merchants and told them of their mistake; thereupon all the chiefs of the market hurried to the syndic to congratulate him and to apologise for not having come to recite their ceremonial verses before him, an omission which they hastened to repair. "O venerable syndic," said Sesame in the name of all, "may Allah preserve in our affection both the tree and the branches, and may the branches in their turn give odorous and gilded fruit to a starved world! It is the custom, even among the poor, to make a birth the occasion of a distribution of sweetmeats among friends and neighbors; and we have not yet sweetened our lips with butter and honey *asidah* to the good health of your first-born. Is there any chance of a great cauldron of *asidah* making its appearance?"

"I ask for nothing better," answered Shamseddin, "only I do not offer you a cauldron of *asidah* simply, but a great feast at my country house among the gardens. I invite all of you, my friends, to come to my garden tomorrow morning and there we will make up, if Allah wills, for lost time."

The excellent syndic returned home at once and made great preparations for the morrow. He sent sheep which had been fattened for six months on green leaves, to be roasted at the ovens, with well-buttered lambs, a multitude of pastries, and other pleasant things; he overwhelmed with work those among his slaves who were skilled in the making of sweetmeats and all the confectioners of Zayni Street; in fact, his feast left nothing to be desired.

Early on the following morning, he took Beauty-Spot with him to his garden and caused the slaves to spread two enormous cloths in two different parts of the garden. He said to his son: "One of these cloths is for the men, and the other for the boys who will come

with their fathers. I will entertain the bearded and you must look after the comfort of the beardless." "Why this separation?" asked Beauty-Spot in surprise. "Surely it is only usual when there is a question of men and women? Boys like myself have nothing to fear from bearded men." "My son," answered the syndic, "the lads will feel freer and have a more amusing time without their fathers." And Beauty-Spot, who was naturally innocent, contented himself with this reply.

When the guests came, Shamseddin received the men, and Beauty-Spot the boys. They ate and drank and sang, gaiety and delight shone from every face, incense and aromatic woods were burnt in braziers. When the feast was finished, slaves handed round cups of sherbet and snow; and the grown men chatted agreeably together while the boys played games.

Now among the guests there was a certain merchant, perhaps the syndic's best customer, a famous rake-hell, whose exploits had become only too well known in the quarter in which he lived. His name was Mahmud, but he was never known under any other title than that of "Athenian."

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

When Mahmud Athenian heard the sweet shouts of the boys at play, he was stirred to his depths and, thinking to himself: "Surely there may be some wind-

fall to be picked up over there," he rose and, pretending that he had a pressing need, stole through the trees until he came all amongst the boys. He halted in appreciation of their lithe movements and handsome faces; it was not long before he decided that by far the most exquisite was Beauty-Spot. He revolved a thousand plans for speaking to the lad and taking him apart, and was muttering: "Ya Allah! if only he would move a little away from his comrades!" when Destiny played into his hands.

Beauty-Spot, excited by the game, his cheeks blowing with healthy roses, felt the need to piss, and, being well brought up, did not wish to squat down in front of his guests. Therefore he went aside among the trees; and, seeing this, Bilateral said to himself, "If I approach him now, I will frighten him. I must adopt some other plan." He walked out from behind the tree and was at once recognised by the boys, who began to hoot at him and run between his legs. He smiled happily at them, and at last said: "Listen, my children, each of you shall have tomorrow a new robe and enough money for all his foolishness, if you can succeed in determining Beauty-Spot to travel and vagabond away from Cairo." "That will be easy, Bilateral," answered the boys; so Mahmud left them and returned to the other company.

When Beauty-Spot came back to his place, his comrades winked at each other and the most eloquent said: "While you were away, we were talking of the marvels of travel and of wonderful far-off countries; of Damascus and Aleppo and Baghdad. Your father is so rich that you must surely have been journeys with him many times among the caravans. Tell us a few of the wonders which you have seen." "I?" answered Beauty-Spot. "Do you not know that I was brought

up in a cellar and only came out yesterday? One cannot see much of the world in a cellar. It was hard enough to persuade my father to take me to the shop."

"Poor Beauty-Spot! You have been deprived of the most delightful joys in all the world. My friend, if you only knew what a wonderful thing travel is, you would not stay another day in your father's house. All the poets have sung the delights of wandering. One of them said:

Sing the joys of vagabonding,
All that's beautiful travels far;
Even the moon-coloured pearl
Must forsake the deep green levels,
Leave the ancient ocean's bonding,
And be drawn across the beaches
Where the waiting merchants are,
Ere it shows and glows and reaches
To a crown's immortal bevels,
Or the white neck of a girl."

When he heard this poem, Beauty-Spot answered: "You may be right; but a quiet home has its charm also." One of the boys began to laugh, saying to the others: "Poor Beauty-Spot is like the fish, who cannot live out of water." Another improved on this, saying: "He is afraid of spoiling the roses of his cheeks." "He is like a woman," added a third, "no woman can go a step alone." A fourth exclaimed: "O Beauty-Spot, are you not ashamed of being such a girl?"

The poor boy was so mortified that he at once left his guests and, mounting his mule, galloped back to the city. He ran to his mother, with rage in his heart and tears in his eyes, so that the woman was fright-

ened by his appearance. He repeated the mocking jests which had been made at his expense and declared his intention of setting out at once, for no matter what place, so long as he could set out. "You see this knife," he added, "I shall thrust it into my breast if I am not allowed to travel."

His mother could only weep and acquiesce. "I promise to help you in every way I can," she said. "As I am sure your father will refuse his consent, I will give you an outfit of merchandise at my own expense." "Then we must act before my father's return," said Beauty-Spot.

Shamseddin's wife got the slaves to open one of the reserve stocks of her husband's goods and made enough of them into bales to load ten camels.

As soon as his guests had gone, the syndic hunted for his son in the garden and at last learned from the slaves that he had set out for home. Fearing lest some misfortune had happened to him by the way, Shamseddin rode his mule at full gallop and came breathless to the courtyard of his house, where he was relieved to hear from the gate-keeper that his son had returned in safety. Nevertheless he was greatly surprised to see bale after bale standing ready in the court, all ticketed to such destinations as Aleppo, Damascus, and Baghdad.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

He hurried to his wife, who told him all that had passed and insisted that it would be dangerous to

thwart the boy. "Nevertheless I will try to dissuade him," said the syndic; and, calling Beauty-Spot to him, he addressed him thus: "My child, may Allah lighten your understanding and turn you from your fatal project! Our Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace) has said: 'Happy is the man who lives on the fruits of the earth and finds contentment for his whole lifetime upon the spot where he was born.' The ancients had this saying: 'Do not enter upon a journey, even for one mile.' After these two wise counsels, do you still persist in your resolution?"

"Dear father," answered Beauty-Spot, "it would grieve me very much to disobey you, but, if you refuse to let me leave, I will throw off my costly clothes, dress in the rags of a dervish, and wander on foot through all the countries of the world."

Seeing that his son was determined, the syndic said: "Very well, my child, I will give you forty more loads, so that you will have fifty camels altogether. You will find goods appropriate for each of the towns which you enter; for you must not try to sell at Aleppo the fabrics which are popular in Damascus. That would be a bad speculation. Go, my son, and may Allah protect you and flatten the road before you. Above all, take great care when you go through the Valley of Dogs, which is in the Desert of the Lion. Notorious bandits haunt there, under the leadership of a Bedouin known as Quick." "Evil and good alike lie in the hand of Allah," answered Beauty-Spot. "Whatever I do I shall only receive that which is due to me."

As these sentiments were unanswerable, the syndic did not reply; but his wife could not be satisfied until she had made a thousand exclamatory prayers, promised a hundred sheep to various holy men, and again

and again placed her son under the protection of Abd Al-Kadir Gilani, saint of wayfarers.

While Beauty-Spot was escaping with difficulty from the farewells of his weeping mother, Shamseddin took aside the old intendant of the camel-drivers, one Kamal, and said: "Worthy intendant, I confide my child to you, the apple of my eye; I trust him to your guardianship and the protection of Allah. . . . Remember, my son, that this is your father while you are away. Obey him, and never do anything without his advice." Then he gave a thousand golden dinars to Beauty-Spot, saying as a last recommendation: "I give you these that you may live on them while waiting for the ripe and advantageous moment on which to sell your goods. Do not offer for sale that which others are offering at the same time; keep it till the stocks of your rivals are exhausted and the price rules high." After last farewells the caravans started.

As soon as Mahmud Bilateral heard of Beauty-Spot's departure, he hurried on his own and overtook him at two leagues from Cairo with a troop of mules, camels, and saddle horses. "O Mahmud," he said to himself, "here in the desert there is no one to denounce you, no one to spy upon you; you can do as you will with a tranquil mind."

At the first halt, Bilateral had his tents pitched beside those of Beauty-Spot, and, telling the child's cook not to trouble to light a fire, invited the object of his desire to feed in his own tent.

Beauty-Spot came, but he was accompanied by old Kamal, the intendant of the camel-drivers, so that Bilateral had only his trouble for his pains. The same thing happened on each succeeding day until both caravans reached Damascus.

© DINGWALL-ROCK, LD.

"The caravan started and was soon outside the gates of Cairo."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

At this city, as at Cairo, Aleppo, and Baghdad, Bilateral had a house where he was accustomed to entertain his friends, so he sent a slave to Beauty-Spot, who remained in his tents at the entrance of the city, inviting him to come alone to visit him. "Wait till I have asked old Kamal's advice," answered Beauty-Spot; but the worthy camel-driver frowned at the invitation, and said: "No, my son, you must decline." Therefore Beauty-Spot sent a message of polite refusal.

Neither caravan stayed long at Damascus; when both reached Aleppo, Bilateral sent the same invitation to Beauty-Spot, and Kamal again advised him to refuse. Although he did not understand why the intendant insisted so, the boy refused again; and Bilateral was still without any reward for his journey.

As soon as Aleppo was left behind, Bilateral swore that he would be thwarted no longer; so, at the first halt on the road to Baghdad he prepared a wonderful feast and went himself to invite Beauty-Spot. This time the youth was obliged to accept, as he had no serious excuse.

As he was dressing himself suitably in his tent, Kamal came to him, saying: "You are very imprudent, O Beauty-Spot. Do you not understand Mahmud's intentions? Do you not know why he is called Bilat-

eral? You should listen to old men. A poet has written about them:

As an old man I walked bent
Because my youth was wasted and spent
Upon the ground;
I stooped to look for it and take it thence
When lo! I found
The fardel of experience
So heavily upon my shoulders lain,
I could not straighten them again."

But Beauty-Spot answered: "It would have been very rude to refuse the invitation, whatever reason people have for calling our friend Bilateral. Besides, he cannot eat me." "Can he not? he has already eaten many others," answered the intendant sharply.

Beauty-Spot laughed and hastened to rejoin Bilateral, who was waiting anxiously for him. They entered the tent where the feast was spread and the boy saw that his host had spared no pains to receive him with all that might charm the eye or flatter the senses. The meal was gay and animated; both ate heavily and drank from the same cup until they were satisfied. When the wine had well mounted to their heads and the slaves had discreetly withdrawn, Bilateral moved near Beauty-Spot and showered personal attentions upon the boy; but the boy, whose mind was troubled by this, instinctively shrank further and further from the approaches of his host. Next Mahmud threw one arm around his guest's neck and drew him to him with the other. "What do you wish to do?" cried Beauty-Spot; and Bilateral answered: "Simply to expound by practice these verses of the poet:

Are not these young eyes all fire,
O desire!
When the first flush of yon moon,
Rising soon,
Show us, in the scented night,
Our delight,
Fairer than the fairest flower
Is this hour.
Of strange delights we'll learn the taste
O make haste!
Now—ere dawns the seeing day,
Come—and play!"

Bilateral said these verses in a certain fashion and Beauty-Spot, without well understanding their ambiguity, felt uncomfortable and wished to depart. Mahmud held him back, however, and finally broached that which was in his mind, frankly.

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

When Beauty-Spot understood Bilateral's intentions and had well considered his request, he rose saying: "As Allah lives, I do not sell that kind of goods. The only consolation I can give you is the assurance that, if ever I sell it to others, I will give it to you for nothing." Then, in spite of his host's prayers, he left the tent and hurried back to his own camp, where the intendant was anxiously awaiting him. "Tell me, in Allah's name, what has passed?" said Kamal, noticing the boy's strange looks. "Nothing

happened," answered Beauty-Spot, "only we must absolutely strike camp at once and journey to Baghdad, as I do not want to travel longer with Bilateral. His pretensions are exaggerated and troublesome." "Did I not tell you so?" asked the camel-driver. "But praise be to Allah that nothing happened! I think it would be very dangerous for us to go on alone; it would be better for us to stay as we are, a single caravan, for mutual protection against the Bedouin cutthroats who haunt these ways." But Beauty-Spot would not be convinced, so the little caravan set out alone and journeyed forward, until one day at sunset it was only a few leagues from the gates of Baghdad. Kamal came to Beauty-Spot, saying: "My son, we had better push on to Baghdad tonight instead of camping in this place, which is the most dangerous of all our journey and is called the Valley of Dogs. If we were to pass the night here, we would almost certainly be attacked. Let us hurry forward and reach the city before the gates are shut; for you must know that the khalifat has them strictly closed at night, lest the wandering fanatics enter his city by stealth and throw all the books of science and literary manuscripts into the Tigris."

Beauty-Spot was not at all pleased with this plan, so he answered: "As Allah lives, I do not want to enter the city by night. I want to enjoy the sight of the sunrise over Baghdad. We will pass the night here, for I am in no hurry; as you know, I am not journeying for business, but for simple pleasure and to see what I have not before seen." The old intendant could only give way, although he had dark forebodings of the result.

Beauty-Spot ate a light meal and then, when the slaves had lain down to sleep, left his tent and, walk-

ing up the valley for a little way, sat down under a tree in the moonlight. He called to mind books which he had read with his masters in the cellar and, inspired to revery, began to sing this song:

With delicate pleasures,
O queen of Irak,
O Baghdad, city of poets,
So long have I dreamed of you:
O calm . . .

He was interrupted by a terrible clamour on his left, by a galloping of horses, and wild cries from a hundred throats. He turned and saw his camp overwhelmed by a large band of Bedouins, who seemed to spring from the earth. A sight so strange kept him, as it were, nailed to the ground, and in spite of himself, he saw the wholesale massacre of the caravan and the plundering of his goods. When the Bedouin outlaws saw that no one was left upon his feet, they drove off the camels and mules and disappeared with incredible swiftness.

As soon as his stupefaction had a little decreased, the boy hurried to the place where his camp had been and looked upon the bodies of his dead; even old Kamal's grey hairs had not been spared, he lay with his breast riddled by lances. Beauty-Spot could not bear to look upon these things, he fled precipitately without daring to glance behind him.

So as not to excite the greed of some other band of robbers, he took off his rich clothes and threw them away from him, keeping only his shirt; and, after running all night, entered Baghdad half naked at the break of day.

As he was broken by fatigue and could no longer

stand, he stopped before the first public fountain at the entrance of the city. After he had washed his hands, face, and feet, he climbed to the platform overlooking the water and, lying down upon it, fell fast asleep.

Mahmud Bilateral had also journeyed forward the night before, but he had taken a short cut and so escaped the bandits. He arrived at the gates of Baghdad within a few minutes of Beauty-Spot. As he passed the fountain, he rode near the stone trough to water his tired horse, but the animal saw the shadow of the boy upon the water and started back snorting. Thus it was that Bilateral lifted his eyes to the platform and nearly fell out of the saddle on recognising the half-naked sleeper as Beauty-Spot.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come

She said:

He jumped from his horse and, climbing up to the platform, stood still in admiration before the delightful picture which the boy made, his head resting on one of his arms in the abandonment of sleep. For the first time, Bilateral was able to enjoy the naked perfections of this young and crystal body, starred by that adornment which had given the child his name. As he revolved the mystery of chance which had led him to find the purpose of all his journey asleep above a public fountain, he feasted his eyes upon the round beauty-spot upon the left thigh before him. "What

must I do?'' he said to himself. ''Wake him? Set him on my horse and fly with him to the desert? Wait till he wakes, speak to him tenderly, persuade him to come to my house in Baghdad?''

He finally decided on the last course, and so sat down at the boy's feet to wait his waking, enjoying the rose stains which the sun dropped upon that childish body.

When Beauty-Spot had had his fill of sleep, he moved his limbs and half opened his eyes; at once Mahmud took him by the hand, saying in a voice which he knew very well how to make sweet: ''Have no fear, my child; you are safe with me. I beg you to tell me what has happened.''

Beauty-Spot sat up and, although he was a little troubled to find himself in the presence of his admirer, told Mahmud the whole story. ''Praise be to Allah, my young friend,'' cried the merchant, ''for though he has taken away your fortune, he has spared your life. A poet has said:

My gold is lost, my life is spared;
That is to say
My finger nails are pared,
A thing of every day.

Come to my house for a bath, and new raiment; for, from now on, I beg you to consider all Mahmud's riches your own; even Mahmud's life, if you require it.'' He went on speaking to the boy like a good father until he persuaded him to his will; then climbed down first and helped the boy into the saddle behind him: as he rode towards his house he thought of the strange fate which had placed the venerable syndic's son at his mercy.

He led Beauty-Spot to the hammam and bathed him himself, without the help of any rubber or slave; then he dressed him in a most expensive robe and led him to the hall where he used to receive his friends. This hall was a delicious place of cool shadows, lighted only by the blue-tinted reflections of enamel and frail porcelain, elusive stars falling through the half-light. The odour of a rare incense carried the soul to dream gardens of camphor and cinnamon; a fountain sang low in the middle of the floor; rest and ecstasy made one in the serene air.

As the two sat down on carpets, Mahmud set a cushion for Beauty-Spot's elbow; they ate daintily and drank choicely together, until at last Bilateral could contain himself no longer, and cried aloud the words of a poet:

Tell me not of maiden's blushes,
Kisses taken from pure lips,
Nor the joy of wedded glances:
I must have a joy which dances,
I must have a joy which gushes
Pleasure, keen as lash of whips.

Beauty-Spot had become accustomed to Bilateral's verses, so he easily understood the drift of this rather obscure poem. He jumped to his feet, saying to his host: "I cannot understand why you so harp upon this one string. I can only repeat that, on the day I sell this thing, I will give it to you for nothing." With that he ran out of the hall and out of the house.

He wandered about the city in the falling night and, being a stranger ignorant of Baghdad, determined to pass the night in a mosque which he came to. He entered the court and was about to take off his sandals

before going further, when he saw two men coming towards him attended by slaves with two lighted lanterns. He stepped to one side to let them pass, but the elder paused before him and looked at him closely, saying: "Peace be with you!" Beauty-Spot returned his greeting and the other continued: "Are you a stranger to the city, my child?" "I come from Cairo," answered Beauty-Spot, "my father is Shamseddin, syndic of merchants in that place."

The old man turned to his companion, saying: "Allah has prospered our research! We did not think to find our stranger so quickly."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come

She said:

The old man took Beauty-Spot aside, saying: "I thank Allah who has placed you in our way! We wish to ask you a favour for which we will pay you five thousand dinars, with goods for a thousand, and a horse worth another thousand.

"You must know, my son, that our law decrees the following: when a Mussulman puts away his wife once, he may take her back at the end of three months and ten days without any formality; if he puts her away a second time, he may again take her back after the legal interval; but if he puts her away a third time, or if, without ever having put her away before, he says: 'I put you away three times,' or: 'I swear by the third divorce that you are none of mine,' he may

not take her back should he wish to, till another man has legally married her, lain with her one night, and himself divorced her.

"Now a few days ago this young man, who is with me, lost his temper with my daughter, his wife, and shouted at her: 'Get out of my house! I know you not! I put you away by the Three!' My daughter covered her face with her veil in the presence of her husband, who was then a stranger, took back her dowry, and returned to my house. But now her husband is very anxious to have her again; he has begged me to undertake the reconciliation. In brief, I offer you the position of Unbinder; you are a stranger, so no one need know anything about the matter except the parties concerned and the kadi."

Poverty compelled Beauty-Spot to accept this offer. Saying to himself: "I shall have five thousand dinars, goods for a thousand, a horse worth a thousand, and a whole night of coupling," he turned to the two men and exclaimed: "I accept the office of Unbinder."

"You are helping us out of a great difficulty," said the husband, who had not yet spoken. "I love my wife to distraction. My one fear is that tomorrow morning you may find her to your liking and not wish to give her back; in that case the law would be on your side; therefore I shall require you to make an engagement before the kadi to forfeit ten thousand dinars to me if you do not consent to the divorce when tomorrow comes." Beauty-Spot accepted this condition, as he had quite made up his mind only to lie with the woman for one night.

All three went to the kadi and made the two contracts in his presence. While the legal formalities were being complied with, the kadi looked often at Beauty-Spot and found him a most attractive young

man. We shall hear of the kadi during the course of our narrative.

When the contracts had been signed, the father of the divorced woman led Beauty-Spot to his house and begged him to wait in the vestibule, while he himself hurried to his daughter, saying: "My dear child, I have found an excellently well-built youth whom I hope will please you. I recommend him to you with all my heart; have a charming night with him and deny yourself nothing! It is not every night that one can have so delicious a boy within one's arms." This good parent then returned to Beauty-Spot and made much the same recommendation to him, begging him to wait for a short time until his daughter was ready to receive him.

Now the original husband was very jealous, so he lost no time in seeking out a very cunning old woman who had brought him up. "Good mother," he said to her, "I beg you to find some means to prevent this Unbinder from lying with my wife." "On your life, that is easy enough," answered the old woman.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Wrapping herself in her veil, she went to the house of the divorced woman, and sidled up to the youth whom she found in the vestibule, saying: "Can you tell me where I can find the girl who was recently divorced? I come here every day to rub her body with

my pomades; although I hardly expect to cure her leprosy, poor thing." "Allah preserve me!" exclaimed Beauty-Spot, "is she a leper, good mother? I have to lie with her tonight, as I am the Unbinder chosen by her husband." "Allah keep whole your youth, my son; you had better not lie with a person like that." She left him in a state of the uttermost confusion and, going to the bride, told her the same tale about the Unbinder, advising her not to risk the contamination of his body.

Beauty-Spot waited a long time for the girl to call him, but he saw no one except the slave who brought him food and drink. When he had finished his supper, he recited from the Koran to pass the time and then began gently to sing over some lyric verses in a voice more beautiful than that of David before Saul.

The young woman heard his voice, and said to herself: "What did that wicked old woman mean? A leper could not have so beautiful a voice! As Allah lives, I will call him, and see for myself that the old trot has lied." She took on Indian lute and sang in a voice to draw birds from the sky:

I love a fawn with eyes of languishment;
If you would know the forest way he went,
Watch what young branches still are practising
Their just-learned lesson of the way he bent.

As soon as Beauty-Spot heard the first notes of this song, he ceased his own and listened with charmed attention. "By Allah, that old pomade-seller lied!" he said to himself. "A leper could not have so beautiful a voice." Taking his key from the last note of the song, he answered in a voice which would have made rocks dance:

I send my voice to catch the quick gazelle,
Who still eludes the chase,
That it may wanton where the roses dwell
In the garden of her face.

The young woman ran to lift the curtains which separated her from the singer and showed herself to him suddenly, like a moon unrobing from her clouds. Signing him to enter her own apartment, she showed him the way with such surpassing grace as would have melted the heart of the most stony saint. As Beauty-Spot hesitated between rapture and fear of leprous contagion, the girl took off her chemise and pantalettes and, appeared as naked and clean as virgin silver, as firm and slim as a palm-branch.

Beauty-Spot felt mightily moved at this fair sight. Never before had he beheld so charming a rest for his eyes. He decided that the office of Unbinder was not so menial a task when one considered the matter fairly. A certain shyness overcame him, yet the natural law was strong. He approached his bride to caress her, but she cried out: "Do not come near; I am afraid that I will catch your leprosy."

At these words, Beauty-Spot understood the duplicity of the old woman who had poured evil words in his ears. He spoke not, but answered the foul charge with the inalienable proof of his youthful flesh, untainted and unmarred save for his capricious mole.

The girl saw in a flash her husband's villiany and how he had sought to maintain the letter of the law of three and yet kill its spirit with his scheming. Rage and rapture sat upon her spirit and quickened the pulse of her desire. "I observe," she said, "that my husband would enjoy the benefits of the Unbinder's

services without his defects." "Have I, then, defects?" asked Beauty-Spot, innocently. "None, my dear. You are astonishing perfection. I spoke of the defects inherent in the custom, not in your fair self." At these compliments Beauty-Spot, who was unused to the words of love, became mantled in a rosy blush. Seeing this, the girl realized his youth and inexperience and was more charmed than ever before. "My fair Unbinder," she said, "I am your willing slave." Beauty-Spot was enraptured at the honeyed tone in which she said these words and the ravishing glance which accompanied their delivery. He approached her and, taking her by the hand, led her to the couch. Their lips came together and Beauty-Spot tasted the tingling ecstasy of his first caress.

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

Feeling that his child was safely cradled in delight, among the girl's pillaged flower-beds, he clasped her tenderly and all three slept together till morning.

At dawn Beauty-Spot asked his transitory wife her name. "Zobeida," she answered, and he continued: "Dear Zobeida, I infinitely regret that I have got to leave you." "And why have you got to leave me?" she asked. "Have you forgotten that I am only the Unbinder?" he questioned. "As Allah lives, I had forgotten!" she cried. "I thought, in my happiness, that you were some marvellous gift which my father

had given me to take the place of the other." "No, charming Zobeida, I am only the Unbinder," he was forced to reply, "and I have signed a contract in front of the kadi to forfeit ten thousand dinars if I do not abandon you; as I have only one dirham in my pocket, it is parting either way; for if I keep you, I shall go to prison."

Zobeida reflected for a while and then, kissing the youth's eyes, asked him his name. "I am called Beauty-Spot," he answered, and she went on: "Ya Allah, you are well named. Dear Beauty-Spot, as I have come to love you more than all the sugar candies in the world, I swear that I will find some way of never leaving you; for I would die if I belonged to any other now. You alone are my heart's delight." "But what can we do?" he asked. "It is quite simple," she answered. "My father will soon come to take you to the kadi to fulfil the formalities of your contract. You must take the kadi apart and whisper in his ear: 'I do not want a divorce.' 'What?' he will ask, 'do you refuse five thousand dinars, goods to the value of a thousand, and a horse worth a thousand, for the sake of a woman?' 'Each of her hairs are worth ten thousand dinars,' you must answer; then the kadi will say: 'The law is on your side, but you must pay the husband ten thousand dinars as compensation.'

"Now, my dear, listen carefully. The old kadi, though a man of excellent character in every other way, is susceptible and I am quite sure that you have already made a considerable impression on him."

"Do you think that the kadi is also that way?" cried Beauty Spot; and Zobeida burst out laughing as she answered: "Assuredly; is there anything very aston-

ishing about that?" Said the youth: "Surely it is written that Beauty-Spot must spend his life in going from one bilateral to another! I pray you to continue, O clever Zobeida. But first, surely you are not going to advise me to sell my goods to the old kadi?"

Zobeida continued: "Wait and see. When the kadi tells you that you must pay ten thousand dinars, you will look at him like this, making your eyes move gently, but not too much. This will please the old man on his carpet, for he is, in this, quite a fool. When you have done this, he will give you time in which to pay your debt; and after that Allah will provide."

"The thing is possible," answered Beauty-Spot.

Just at this moment a slave entered, saying: "Mistress Zobeida, your father waits for this youth outside." Beauty-Spot dressed in haste and, joining the father and the husband, went with them to the kadi.

Zobeida's expectations were fulfilled to the letter; the kadi, being almost done to death by the side-long glances of the youth, gave him not only three days in which to pay, as Beauty-Spot modestly requested, but ten days, adding: "Neither religious nor civil law obliges anyone to divorce; the four orthodox rituals are in accord upon this point. We give the Unbinder ten days in which to pay."

Beauty-Spot kissed the hand of the old man, who was saying to himself: "As Allah lives, the boy himself is well worth ten thousand; I would willingly lend him the money myself." The youth hurried to rejoin his wife.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

Zobeida received his news with transports of joy and gave him a hundred dinars to prepare a feast for the two of them, which should last all night. Beauty-Spot bought all that was necessary and the lovers ate and drank until they were satisfied; then they feasted in other fashion; and, at last, that they might rest themselves, went down to the reception hall, lit all the lamps, and held a concert just for themselves alone, which would have made rocks dance and drawn birds from the sky.

Suddenly Zobeida heard a knocking on the outer door and, at her suggestion, Beauty-Spot went to open.

That night the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, feeling himself in an ill-humour, had said to his wazir Giafar, his sword-bearer Masrur, and his favourite poet, the delicious Abu Nowas: "I feel my breast heavy tonight; let us walk a little in the streets of Baghdad to find some relief for our humours." The four disguised themselves as Persian dervishes and, as they wandered through the streets in search of some amusing adventure, heard the sound of playing and singing in the house of Zobeida. Faithful to their character of dervishes, they at once knocked at the door.

When Beauty-Spot saw them, he received them cordially and led them into the vestibule, for he was in excellent spirits and by nature hospitable. He brought food, but they said: "As Allah lives, sensitive spirits have no need of food but only of music. What professional singer was discoursing such excellent melody?" "It was my wife," answered Beauty-Spot; and

he told them the whole of his story from beginning to end; but nothing would be gained by repeating it here.

The leader of the dervishes, who was no other than the khalifat, felt himself stirred by a sudden affection for Beauty-Spot, so he said to him: "My son, take no care for the matter of the ten thousand dinars. I am chief of the convent of dervishes in Baghdad; there are forty of us and we are, thanks to Allah, in fairly comfortable circumstances; we shall certainly not miss ten thousand dinars. I promise to let you have the sum before the ten days are out. Now, if you please, beg your wife to sing us something from behind the curtain, that our souls may be exalted. Music, my son, is a dinner for some, a cure for others, and a fan for others; for us it is all three."

Zobeida sang for the dervishes and they passed a night filled with delights, listening and applauding with all their lungs, or laughing at the witty improvisations of Abu Nowas, who was more than half drunk with the beauty of his host.

In the morning, the dervishes rose to go, after the khalifat had slipped under his cushion a purse containing a hundred golden dinars, all the money he had with him; they thanked their host, through the mouth of Abu Nowas, who invented exquisite stanzas of farewell, privately promising himself at the same time not to lose sight of so delectable a boy.

Towards noon, Beauty-Spot wished to go out to the market to purchase certain necessaries with the money which the khalifat had left. On opening the door, he saw before the house fifty mules loaded with bales of precious stuffs, and a fifty-first mule richly harnessed, carrying upon its back a young Abyssinian slave, brown-bodied and as pretty as a dream, who held a letter in his hand.

As soon as he saw Beauty-Spot, the tender boy jumped to the ground and, kissing the earth between his hands, gave him the letter, saying: "O Beauty-Spot, I have been sent from Cairo by your father, my master Shamseddin, to bring you fifty thousand dinars' worth of costly merchandise and a present for your wife, the lady Zobeida, consisting of a jewelled ewer and a basin of wrought gold."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

Beauty-Spot was both surprised and delighted at this seemingly miraculous happening. He opened the letter and read:

"*After the fullest possible wishes for his happiness and health from Shamseddin to his son, Aladdin Beauty-Spot!*

"My dear son, I have heard of the disaster which overtook your caravan and the loss of all your goods; therefore I have prepared a new lading of fifty mules, worth fifty thousand dinars. Your mother sends you a fair robe which she has embroidered herself, together with a ewer and basin destined for your wife. She hopes they will suit her.

"We were a little surprised to hear that you had acted as Unbinder in a divorce, but feel that you were quite right to keep the woman when you found, by trial, that she pleased you. The goods which I send by little Salim, the Abyssinian, will

much more than pay the ten thousand dinars which you owe the former husband.

"Your mother and all of us are well and happy; we hope that you will soon return, and send you affectionate greetings and much love.

Beauty-Spot was so pleased with this letter and the rich gift that he did not stop to think how unlikely the whole happening was, but went in at once to tell his wife. He had hardly finished explaining, when Zobeida's father and first husband entered. "I pray you have pity on my son-in-law, for he loves his wife to distraction," said the father to Beauty-Spot. "Allah has sent you riches so that you may buy the fairest slaves in the market or marry the daughter of some emir. If you give back this poor man's wife, he will be your slave." "Allah has sent me riches in order that I may richly compensate my predecessor," corrected Beauty-Spot. "I freely give him the fifty mules with their merchandise and also Salim, the pretty Abyssinian slave. Nevertheless, if Zobeida consents to return to her former husband, I will give her her freedom." The older man went to find his daughter and said to her: "Will you return to your former husband?" Zobeida answered with exaggerated gestures: "Ya Allah! Ya Allah! He never knew the worth of the rosebuds in my garden; he passed them by with a careless glance. As Allah live, I will stay with the youth who has a deeper appreciation of such matters."

When the first husband realized that hope had passed for him, his liver burst upon the spot and he died. So much for him.

Beauty-Spot lived pleasantly with his delightful

wife, and each evening, after feasting and every manner of dancing, they held concert which would have made rocks dance and drawn birds from the sky.

On the tenth day after his marriage, Beauty-Spot remembered the promise which the dervish chief had made to him, so he said to his wife: "Chief of liars, more like! If I had waited for his help I would have died in prison. If ever I meet him again, I will tell him what I think of him."

As evening fell, he illuminated the hall; the concert was about to begin when a knocking was heard on the door. Beauty-Spot was not surprised, on opening, to see the dervishes; he laughed in their faces, saying: "Welcome, O liars; welcome, gentlemen of bad faith! But come in, come in; for Allah has freed me from any need of your services. Besides, though you are liars and hypocrites, you are charming and well-bred." He led them into the hall and prayed Zobeida to sing them something from behind the curtain. She obeyed him in a fashion to steal away the reason, to make rocks dance, and draw birds out of the sky.

In the course of time, the dervish chief rose and departed to satisfy a need; taking advantage of his absence, the poet Abu Nowas whispered in the ear of his host: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

"Charming host, may I ask you a question: how could you believe for a moment in your father's pres-

ent of fifty mules? How long does it take to come from Cairo to Baghdad?" "Forty-five days," answered Beauty-Spot; and the poet continued: "And to return?" "The same," the youth admitted. Then Abu Nowas burst out laughing, and said: "How could you expect your father to hear of the loss of your caravan in less than ten days?" "By Allah," cried Beauty-Spot, "my joy was so great that I never thought of the matter at all! Tell me, O dervish, who wrote the letter, and who sent the gifts?" "Dear Beauty-Spot," replied the poet, "if you were as clever as you are handsome, you would have long ago divined under these garments the presence of the khalifat himself, Haroun Al-Rachid, Defender of the Faith; Giafar Al-Barmaki, his wise wazir; Masrur, the sworder; and a simple poet, your devoted slave and admirer, Abu Nowas."

Beauty-Spot was thrown into astonished confusion: "O great poet," he asked timidly, "can you tell me what merit of mine attracts such great kindness from the khalifat?" Abu Nowas answered with a smile: "Your beauty. . . . In the king's eyes to be young, sympathetic, and handsome is the first of virtues; he considers that one cannot pay too high a price for the privilege of looking upon a lovely face."

As soon as the khalifat returned to his place upon the carpet, Beauty-Spot bowed before him, saying: "O Prince of Believers, may Allah continue you in our love and never deny you great returns for all your kindness." The khalifat smiled and caressed him lightly on the cheek, saying: "I will expect you tomorrow night at the palace." Then he rose and departed, followed by Giafar, Masrur, and Abu Nowas, who strongly urged his host not to forget the appointment.

Next morning, Beauty-Spot chose out the most precious from those things which had been sent him and packed them in a handsome chest which he confided to little Salim; then, when his wife had dressed and arranged him with great care, he made his way to the khalifat's diwan, taking the slave with him. Laying the chest before the throne, he made a compliment in a well-constructed verse, and added: "Commander of the Faithful, our blessed Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) used to accept gifts in order not to offend their givers. Think of your slave's delight if you would deign to receive this little box as a mark of his eternal gratitude." The khalifat was charmed by this attention. "It is too much, O Beauty-Spot," he said, "you yourself, without any box, are a gift for kings. Welcome to my palace; for, from today, I give you high employment." Straightway he deprived of his office the chief syndic of the merchants and gave it to Beauty-Spot, proclaiming the appointment by a firman, which was cried through all the streets and markets of Baghdad.

From that time the khalifat would not let a day pass without seeing Beauty-Spot; so, as the youth had not opportunity himself to sell his merchandise, he opened a handsome shop and installed in it the small brown slave, who showed great aptitude in delicate business.

Two or three days after Beauty-Spot had become syndic, the death was announced to Haroun Al-Rachid of his chief cup-bearer. At once he gave the post to Beauty-Spot, together with the appropriate robe of honour and sumptuous revenues.

Next day, as the youth stood beside the khalifat, the grand chamberlain entered and kissed the earth before the throne, saying: "Allah preserve the king's days and make them longer than those of the poor

chief officer of the palace; for he has just died." "Allah have him in His holy keeping!" cried the khalifat, and, at the same hour raised Beauty-Spot to the high position of the dead man, according him a still more sumptuous allowance; in order that he might keep the youth by his side all of each day. When the new appointment had been announced, Haroun Al-Rachid waved his handkerchief as a sign that the diwan was ended.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

Beauty-Spot spent all his days at the palace and only returned at night to lie joyfully with his wife, after telling her all the happenings at the palace. The khalifat's love increased for him each day and at last he would have sacrificed all he possessed to satisfy the young man's least desire.

For instance, Haroun Al-Rachid gave a concert at which Giafar, Masrur, Abu Nowas, and Beauty-Spot were present; and the favourite herself, the fairest and most accomplished of his concubines, sang from behind a curtain. Suddenly the khalifat looked hard at Beauty-Spot, saying: "My friend, I read in your eyes that this favourite of mine pleases you." "What pleases the master ought to please the slave," replied the youth; but the khalifat cried: "I swear by my head and by the tomb of my ancestors that she belongs to you!" He called his chief eunuch, saying: "Have

all the belongings of my favourite, Delight-of-Hearts, together with her forty slaves, taken to the Officer's house; then return and conduct the lady herself to that place in a litter." But Beauty-Spot objected: "I beg you very humbly, O Commander of the Faithful, to spare your unworthy slave the impiety of touching what belongs to his master." Haroun Al-Rachid understood and answered: "Perhaps you are right. It is likely that your wife would be jealous of a woman whose lot has been so royal. Let her remain in my palace." Then, turning to his wazir Giafar, he said: "You must go down to the slave market at once and buy for ten thousand dinars the most beautiful slave at present offered for sale. Send her, without delay, to Beauty-Spot's house."

Giafar did as he was bid, but took Beauty-Spot with him to choose for himself.

Now it so happened that the emir Khalid, who was wali of the city, had also gone down to the market that day to buy a slave for his son, who had just reached the age of puberty. This son was so ugly that he might easily have made any woman miscarry: he was deformed and stinking, with unpleasant breath, squint eyes, a mouth as large as the mouth of an old cow, and went by the name of Big-Bloat.

The night before, Big-Bloat had reached his fourteenth year and his mother had grieved because she had been expecting for some time past to see signs of virility in her son. Her fears were put at rest in the morning by certain unequivocal indications which proved that Big-Bloat had at least learned how to be man in his dreams. In an ecstacy of delight, the mother had run to her husband with the good news and persuaded him to take the boy down to the market and buy him a beautiful slave.

Thus Destiny, which lies between the hands of Allah, caused all four to meet in the market and to stay together while the brokers led white, brown and black slaves before them. They looked at a prodigious quantity of Greek girls, Chinese, Abyssinians and Persians; and were about to go away without having made up their minds, when the chief broker himself walked past, leading a girl more beautiful than the full moon in Ramadan. When he saw her, Big-Bloat began to snuffle with desire, and said to his father: "That is the one I want." At the same time Giafar asked Beauty-Spot: "Will this one do?" and the other answered: "She will."

"What is your name, gentle slave?" asked Giafar, and the girl replied: "O my master, it is Yasmine." The wazir asked Yasmine's price, and the broker answered: "Five thousand dinars, my masters." At once Big-Bloat cried: "I will give six!" When Beauty-Spot murmured: "I will give eight," Big-Bloat snorted with rage and shouted: "Eight thousand and one!" "Nine thousand and one!" said Giafar; but Beauty-Spot corrected him, calling out: "Ten thousand dinars!"

"Going, going, gone, at ten thousand dinars, the slave Yasmine!" said the broker quickly, and he handed over the girl to Beauty-Spot.

Big-Bloat fell to the ground, beating the air with his hands and feet, much to the chagrin of the emir Khalid, who hated his son for his ugliness and idiocy, and had only brought him to the market because he made a habit of obeying his wife.

Beauty-Spot, after cordially thanking Giafar, led Yasmine to his own house—for he already loved her and she loved him—and introduced her to his wife, who found her sympathetic and gave her a great friend-

ship. Charmed by Zobeida's approval, Beauty-Spot took Yasmine as his second wife and slept with her that same night, so that she conceived; as the sequel of this tale will show.

When his father had succeeded with promises and cajoleries in taking Big-Bloat home, the boy threw himself upon his bed and refused to rise for food or drink; he had almost lost his reason. While the women of the house were crowding round his mother and commiserating with her, an old woman entered, whose son was a very famous thief, called Ahmad-the-Moth.

Now Ahmad-the-Moth, though he was at present serving a life sentence, was so exquisite a robber that, merely for pastime, he would steal a door in the presence of the door-keeper and dispose of it so quickly that it looked as if he had swallowed it; he would dig through walls under their owner's eye, while pretending to piss against them; he could cut off a man's eyelashes while talking to him and never be even suspected; or remove the kohl from a woman's eyes as she complimented him upon his honesty.

Big-Bloat's mother greeted the mother of Ahmad-the-Moth, and, when she asked why she was so sad and what illness the boy was suffering from, did not hesitate to confide in her. "O my mistress," cried the old woman, "only my son could help you in this matter. Try to obtain his freedom and he will find a way to transfer the beautiful Yasmine to our young master. You must know that my poor boy lies chained hand and foot in prison, with an iron collar about his neck on which are engraved the words: 'For ever!' And all for a little matter of coining!"

Big-Bloat's mother promised to do what she could; when the wali returned that evening, she went to him after supper, scented and tricked out with excessive

care, wearing a practised promising smile, so that the excellent Khalid could not resist the fires which her appearance lit within his heart. He wished to take her, but she resisted, saying: "First swear by divorce that you will grant me what I ask." He swore, and the woman at once told him a pitiable tale of the robber and his poor old mother. When he promised the man's release, she allowed him to mount her.

Next morning the emir went to the prison where Ahmad-the-Moth was confined and asked him whether he repented. "I bitterly repent," answered the other. "I am prepared to proclaim the fact aloud." So the wali took him from prison and led him before the khalifat, who was astonished to see him still alive. "Are you not dead yet, O thief?" cried Haroun Al-Rachid, and the man replied: "As Allah lives, O Prince of Believers, the wicked are very hard to kill." The khalifat laughed heartily, saying: "Send for a blacksmith and remove his irons. I know your exploits well, my man; as I wish to keep you in the path of repentance and as none knows better than you all the robbers which there are in my city of Baghdad, I name you chief of police." So Ahmad-the-Moth, chief of police, kissed the khalifat's hand and entered at once upon his new duties.

To begin with, as a double celebration, he went to a tavern kept by one Abraham, a Jew, an old accomplice of his, and emptied several flagons of his favourite drink, a certain excellent Ionian wine. There his mother found him a little drunk, pulling the Jew about the chamber by his beard, a liberty which the old man was forced to allow to so great and inconvenient an acquaintance. With some difficulty she managed to take him aside and tell him the whole story of his deliverance, adding that the least return he could make

for it was to find some way of stealing the slave from Beauty-Spot. "It shall be done tonight. There is nothing very difficult about that," answered Ahmad-the-Moth, and straightway began to prepare for the enterprise.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

Now you must know that on that night, which was the first of the month, the khalifat had gone, as was his custom, to visit his wife, in order to talk with her over the affairs of the time and take her advice on many subjects. He had great confidence in her, loving her for her wisdom and for a beauty which never seemed to fade. Always before entering the chamber of his queen, he would place upon a special stand in the vestibule his chaplet of alternate amber and turquoise beads, his sabre which had a jade hilt incrusted with rubies as big as pigeons' eggs, his royal seal, and a little gold lamp studded with precious stones which used to light his secret midnight inspections of the palace.

These details were well-known to Ahmad-the-Moth and he used them for his own ends. Waiting till all the slaves were asleep in the dead of night, he climbed the wall of the pavilion by means of a rope ladder and, entering the vestibule as silently as a shadow, took the four precious objects and went back by the way he had come.

He ran to Beauty-Spot's house and, noiselessly breaking into the courtyard, lifted one of the squares of marble which paved it, rapidly dug a shallow trench, and there hid three of the stolen objects, keeping the little gold lamp as his commission. Then, when he had removed all traces of his visit, he returned to continue his carouse at Abraham's tavern.

Great was the khalifat's surprise when he went out in the morning and found none of his possessions on the stand. He questioned the eunuchs, who fell on their faces before him protesting ignorance, and then entered into an anger so formidable that he hurried at once to put on his terrible robe of rage. This was of red silk and, when the khalifat wore it, all who came in his way might be certain of calamity.

Flaming in this deadly garment, Haroun Al-Rachid seated himself upon his throne in solitude. All his chamberlains and wazirs came in one by one and lay down on their bellies before him, while Giafar, with a colourless face, stood upright, fixing his eyes upon the sultan's feet.

After an hour of awful silence, the king said to Giafar: "The cup boils." "Allah prevent evil!" answered Giafar.

Just at that moment the wali entered with Ahmad-the-Moth. "Come here, O emir Khalid," said the king. "How goes the public peace in my city of Baghdad?" "Prince of Believers, it goes well," answered Big-Bloat's father; and the khalifat answered: "You lie!" The wali began to stammer excuses and Giafar was just whispering to him an account of the theft, when the khalifat continued: "If that lost property, which is dearer to me than all my kingdom, is not recovered by tonight, your head shall be hung on the palace gate."

The wali kissed the earth between the hands of the khalifat, crying: "Prince of Believers, the thief must surely be someone of the palace, for souring wine carries its own ferment. If I may be allowed to speak, the chief of police, who knows every thief in Baghdad, is more responsible than myself. If the stolen things are not recovered, his death should follow and not mine."

Hearing this, Ahmad-the-Moth came forward, saying: "Commander of the Faithful, the thief shall be discovered. I beg your majesty to give me a firman, authorising me to search the houses of all who have employment about the palace, even the kadi, even Giafar, even Beauty-Spot." Haroun Al-Rachid wrote him the firman, saying: "Someone's head must be cut off for this; it is for you to choose whether it be the robber's or your own. I swear by my life and by the tomb of my ancestors that even if my own son, the heir to my throne, were guilty, he should be publicly hanged."

Ahmad took with him his authorisation, two of the kadi's guards, and two of the wali's guards, and began his perquisition. He went to Giafar's house, to the wali's house, and to the kadi's house, and came at last to the house of Beauty-Spot, who had not as yet heard anything of the theft.

Ahmad entered the vestibule, carrying his firman in one hand and a heavy brass rod in the other, and told Beauty-Spot all that had happened, adding: "I shall not dream of carrying out a real search in the house of the khalifat's most faithful confidant. Allow me to take the perquisition for granted and retire." "On the contrary, O chief of police, duty must be done," answered Beauty-Spot; and Ahmad, murmuring: "For form's sake only," walked out carelessly into the

courtyard and began to strike the marble slabs with his brass rod.

When he came to the slab about which we have already heard, it gave forth a hollow sound, so he exclaimed: "Dear my lord, there must be some disused vault below this place; I should not be surprised if we had hit upon a buried treasure." Then said Beauty-Spot to the four guards: "Try to lift the slab, that we may see what is beneath it." They inserted the points of their lances at the sides of the marble and lifted it, so that all could see the sword, the seal, and the chaplet which had been stolen.

"In the name of Allah!" cried Beauty-Spot and fainted away, while Ahmad sent at once for the wali, the kadi, and witnesses, who wrote out and sealed a full account of the discovery.

Then, while the kadi was hurrying with this to the khalifat, the guards took the swooning body of Beauty-Spot into custody.

When the khalifat received damning proof of the treachery of his greatest friend, he sat for an hour without speaking and then turned to his captain of the guards, saying: "Let him hang!"

The captain had this sentence cried through all the streets of Baghdad and then went to the house of Beauty-Spot and confiscated his goods and his two wives. The money was placed in the public treasure and the wives were about to be cried for sale, when Big-Bloat's father took possession of Yasmine, as was his right, and the captain himself led Zobeida to his own house.

Now this captain of the guards was Beauty-Spot's great friend and loved him as a father with a faith which could not lie. Though he executed the khalifat's terrible orders in public, he swore to save the life of

his adopted son, and began his benevolent work by giving a safe refuge to one of his wives.

That night Beauty-Spot was doomed to be taken from his prison to the scaffold, so the captain lost no time in going to the governor of the prison and demanding to see the forty or so prisoners who were to be hanged in the evening. He carefully scrutinised each one and, at last, chose out a man who looked very like Beauty-Spot, saying to the governor: "This fellow shall serve me, as the ram served the patriarch in place of his son."

When the hour of execution came, he fixed the rope about the neck of the false Beauty-Spot and launched him into space, in the presence of a mighty crowd; afterwards he waited till midnight and then secretly removed Beauty-Spot from the prison to his own house. He told the youth what he had done for him, adding: "Tell me in Allah's name, my son, why you allowed yourself to be tempted by those things."

At this implied accusation Beauty-Spot fell again into a swoon; when he came to himself, he cried: "I swear, my father, by Allah and by the Prophet that I know nothing of this theft." The captain of the guard believed him, saying: "Sooner or later, my son, the guilty person will be discovered. For the moment our concern is rather with your safety, for you cannot stay in this city now that you have a king for enemy. We must leave your wife in my house and hide you somewhere far from Baghdad, until Allah, in His infinite wisdom, chooses to bring the truth to light. We will cross the salt sea to Alexandria, which is a delightful place to live in, surrounded as it is by green and fertile country."

They departed, without even leaving time for Beauty-Spot to say farewell to Zobeida, and soon left

Baghdad behind them. Being without horses, they went slowly; but, in the course of time, met two rich Jews riding upon mules, money changers of substance in the city. The captain of the guards considered that it would be fatal if these men reported to the khalifat that they had seen Beauty-Spot, so he cried to them: "Come down from your mules!" When the Jews abjectly obeyed, he cut off their heads, took their money, and, mounting one of the animals, gave the other to Beauty-Spot.

Being now mounted, they soon arrived at the port, where they left their beasts at the inn and set out in search of a boat sailing for Alexandria. Without much difficulty they found a vessel about to up-anchor for that city, so the captain gave Beauty-Spot all of the gold he had taken from the Jews and counselled him to wait quietly in Alexandria for any news that he could send him. Promising that he himself would come to fetch him when times were better, he said farewell with tears in his eyes and watched the vessel depart.

He returned to Baghdad and this is what he learned:

The morning after the hanging of the false Beauty-Spot, the khalifat, who was still troubled in his mind, called Giafar, saying: "O my wazir, you have seen the way in which this Beauty-Spot requited all my goodness and abused the great confidence which I had in him; tell me, how could so beautiful a body hide so ugly a soul?" Giafar, though he was very wise, had not been able to conceive a motive for the theft, so he answered: "Commander of the Faithful, surprising actions are no longer surprising when we know the motives for them. In this sad case, we can only judge the effect, the death of the unfortunate boy. Yet Beauty-Spot, the Egyptian, had such spiritual fairness

shining in his face that, though I have seen the thing, I am inclined not to believe it."

The khalifat reflected for an hour, and then replied: "Since he was guilty, I wish to see his body swinging in the air."

The two disguised themselves and went forth to the scaffold. The body was covered with a shroud, but Giafar removed this, and the khalifat recoiled in astonishment, crying: "That is not Beauty-Spot!" Giafar looked at the body and saw at once that what the king said was true. Nevertheless he asked: "What can possibly tell you that it is not Beauty-Spot?" "He was short and this man is tall," said the king. "That is no proof," answered Giafar; "hanging stretches out a man." Then said the khalifat: "My lost friend had two moles upon his cheeks; this man has none." "Death plays strange tricks," answered the wazir, "she can disorder the fairest face." "That may be," cried Haroun Al-Rachid, "but look at the soles of this fellow's feet; here are tattooed the names of the two great Sheikhs, after the manner of the schismatics of Ali. Beauty-Spot was not a Shiah but a Sunnite." Giafar's only answer to this was: "Allah alone may see into the heart of a mystery." The two returned to the palace, having given orders that the body should be buried; and from that day Haroun Al-Rachid banished all memory of Beauty-Spot from his heart.

We have heard that the condemned man's second wife, she who had been the slave Yasmine, was taken home by the emir Khalid for the pleasure of his son Big-Bloat. As soon as this lumpish lad saw her, he rose snorting from his bed and would have taken her in his arms, but the beautiful girl, being disgusted at the appearance of the half-wit, drew a knife from her

belt and held it at arm's length, saying: "Keep off, or I will slay you first and myself afterwards!" Big-Bloat's mother ran forward, screaming: "How do you dare resist my son's desire, insolent baggage?" "O lawless one," replied Yasmine, "how can a woman belong to two men at once? How can a dog pasture in a lion's den?"

"If that is your attitude," snarled Big-Bloat's mother, "I will teach you what it is to live hard while you are here." When the girl answered: "I would rather die than soil my love for my master, be he living or dead," the wali's wife undressed her, and taking her beautiful silk robes and all her jewels, put on her the goat's-hair rags of a kitchen slut and bade her begone to the cooks, saying: "Your work will be to peel onions, light fires, squash tomatoes, and knead dough." "I would much rather do that than look upon the face of your son," answered Yasmine, as she retired to the kitchen, where she soon won the affection of all the slaves. These good people would not allow her to work, but parted her duties among them.

Big-Bloat, you will be glad to hear, took to his bed for good and all, and never rose from it again.

You must remember that Yasmine had been got with child by Beauty-Spot; a few months after she came to the wali's house, she bore a man-child as beautiful as the moon, whom she called Aslan, weeping hot tears the while because his father was not there to choose a name for him.

Little Aslan drank his mother's milk for two years and thus became exceptionally strong and beautiful, and could walk by himself. One day, when his mother was busy, he stoutly clambered up the kitchen stairs and marched into the room where the emir Khalid sat telling his amber chaplet. The wali felt tears come

into his eyes when he saw a little fellow looking so like Beauty-Spot. He took the infant upon his knees and began to caress him, saying: "Blessed be He who makes beauty and then inspires it with life!"

A little later, Yasmine noticed her son's absence and, after seeking him everywhere else, dared to enter the emir's own chamber. Aslan was amusing himself by thrusting his little fingers into the wali's venerable beard, but, when he saw his mother, he stretched out his arms and would have gone to her. Khalid held him back, saying kindly to the woman: "Is this your son, O slave?" "Master, he is the fruit of my heart," she answered. "And who is the father?" said the emir, "one of my servants?" Yasmine burst into tears as she answered: "His father was my husband Beauty-Spot, but now, O master, the child is your son." Moved to the bottom of his heart, the wali exclaimed: "By Allah, you are right! He is now my son." He adopted the child from that hour, saying to the mother: "After today he shall be my son indeed. You must never let him know that he had another father." "I hear and I obey," said Yasmine.

Khalid brought up Aslan as if he had really been the fruit of his own marriage; he gave him a careful education at the hands of a most learned professor, an unrivalled caligraphist, who instructed the boy in fair writing, the Koran, geometry, and poetry. When he was a little older, the wali himself taught him to ride, to tilt with the lance, to fight in tournament, and to practise with every weapon known to man; so that when Aslan was fourteen he was already a most accomplished cavalier, and the khalifat named him emir, even as his father was.

One day fate willed that young Aslan and Ahmad-the-Moth should meet outside the door of Abraham's

tavern. Ahmad asked the lad to come in and have a drink; and as they sat together the chief of police soon became quite drunk. Taking a little gold lamp from his pocket, he lit it to dispel the coming darkness of night. "Ya, Ahmad, give me that beautiful lamp!" cried Aslan. "Allah preserve me from such generosity!" said the chief of police. "How could I give you a thing which has cost so many lives? My dear lad, this lamp killed a certain Egyptian, called Beauty-Spot, who was no other than the Officer of the royal palace." Aslan was deeply interested and begged to be told the story; so Ahmad-the-Moth gave him a true account of the stealing of the lamp, glorifying himself in his drunkenness for having made so clever a stroke.

When Aslan returned home, he informed his mother of all which Ahmad had told him and added that the chief of police still kept the lamp about his person. Much to his surprise, Yasmine uttered a great cry and fell swooning to the ground.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

When she came to herself, she clung sobbing to her son's neck, and said: "My child, Allah has brought the truth to light; I can keep the secret no longer. Dear son, the emir Khalid is only your adopted father; your real father was my husband, Beauty-Spot, who was punished in place of the thief. You must go at

once and find your father's old friend, the captain of the guards, and tell him what you have discovered; also you must swear before him to take vengeance on your father's murderer."

When the captain of the guards heard Aslan's story he rejoiced exceedingly, saying: "Glory to Allah, who throws light into dark places and tears down the veils of mystery! He Himself will undertake your vengeance; be sure of that, my son."

The old man was right; for on that very day the khalifat was holding a tournament of which one of the spectacles was a game of polo. Young Aslan was one of the players; he rode onto the ground mounted upon one of Khalid's most wonderful horses, dressed in his shining coat of mail, and looked so knightly thus that the khalifat was charmed and wished him to play upon his own side.

The game began and all the players showed marvellous skill, following the ball at full gallop and hitting it with great address. Suddenly one of the players of the opposite side hit the ball so strongly in the direction of Haroun Al-Rachid that it would infallibly have put out one of his eyes, or even have killed him, had not Aslan intercepted it with his stick, when it was within a few feet of the khalifat's face, and returned it so heartily that it broke the back of the man who had hit it first.

The khalifat looked at the youth, saying: "A delightful shot, O son of Khalid." With that he dismounted and, putting a stop to the game, assembled his emirs and all the players. Calling Aslan into this assembly, he said: "O valorous offspring of the wali of Baghdad, I wish you to name your own reward." The boy kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands, answering: "I beg for vengeance, O Commander of

the Faithful! The blood of my father still cries from the ground, and his slayer lives!"

The khalifat cried out in great astonishment: "What is this that you say of avenging your father? Your father stands here at my side in excellent health, and I thank Allah for it." "Prince of Believers," answered Aslan, "the emir Khalid is only the best adopted father a boy ever had. My real father is Beauty-Spot, the late Officer of all your palace."

Haroun Al-Rachid saw the light turn to darkness before his eyes, and he answered in a changed voice: "My son, do you not know that your father betrayed his sultan?" "Allah preserve his memory from such a stain!" exclaimed Aslan. "The traitor stands even now at your left hand; he is Ahmad-the-Moth, chief of police. Have him searched, for he carries the proof in his pocket."

The khalifat became as yellow as saffron and called the captain of his guards in a terrible voice, saying: "Search this man in my presence!" Beauty-Spot's old friend went up to Ahmad and, going through his pockets, immediately brought to light the stolen lamp.

"Come here, you; and say how you became possessed of this lamp!" cried Haroun Al-Rachid. "Commander of the Faithful, I bought it," answered Ahmad. Then cried the khalifat: "Beat him until he confesses!" and when his body had been stripped naked and seived out with blows, the chief of police confessed all and told the whole story of his treachery.

The khalifat turned to Aslan, saying: "It is now your turn; hang him with your own hand!" The guards quickly erected a gallows in the midst of the polo ground; and little Aslan and the captain, pulling

on the rope together, hoisted Ahmad-the-Moth into the forgiveness of Allah.

When justice was done, the khalifat again requested Aslan to name his own reward, and he answered: "I beg you to give me back my father, O Prince of Believers!"

Haroun Al-Rachid wept, saying: "My son, do you not know that your poor father was unjustly hanged? He is almost certainly dead; though I admit that there was some doubt as to the identity of the corpse. Since a flicker of hope remains to us, I swear by my ancestors that no favour will be too great for him who tells me that your father is alive."

At this the captain of the guards came forward, saying: "Give me the word of safety!" "Your safety is certain. Speak!" replied the khalifat, and the old man cried aloud: "I bring good news, Commander of the Faithful! Beauty-Spot, your friend and loving servant, still lives!"

"What is that you say?" cried the king, and the captain continued: "I swear by my life that the thing is true. I myself saved Beauty-Spot, by having a common criminal hanged in his stead. He now abides safely in Alexandria and probably has taken a shop there."

Haroun Al-Rachid rejoiced, saying: "Depart at once and bring him back to me without a moment's delay!" He gave the captain ten thousand dinars for his voyage and despatched him at once to Alexandria where, if Allah wills, we shall hear of him again.

To return to Beauty-Spot: the ship which carried him made an excellent voyage to Alexandria and the young man was delighted by the appearance of the city, which, although he was a native of Cairo, he had

not visited before. He went at once to the market and found that a shop, the owner of which had just died, was being offered for sale as it stood. Beauty-Spot bought it and found it well-equipped for the marine trade. There was a plentiful stock of sails, ropes, pack-thread, stout chests, sacks for private cargo, weapons of every kind and price, and, above all, great heaps of scrap-iron and old lumber, which are very popular among sea captains, who can sell such stuff to the peoples of the West. The men of those lands are passionately fond of any refuse out of the past; they will exchange their wives and daughters for a bit of rotten wood, a talismanic stone, or a rusty sword. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Beauty-Spot, in the long years of his exile, did very well in business and gained ten dinars for every one of his capital. For there is no more lucrative traffic than the sale of antiques for ten dinars, which one buys for a dirham.

Having at last got rid of all his stock, Beauty-Spot was about to sell his shop and was looking over the empty shelves of it when he saw some red and shining object at the back of one of them. Taking it up, he was surprised to find that he held a large talisman, cut into six faces and fastened to a thin chain of old gold. On each square were graven unknown characters which looked like ants and other insects. Beauty-Spot was carefully examining his trove, when he noticed that a ship's captain had stopped in front of the shop and was craning his neck to look at the talisman.

Seeing that he was noticed, the man said: "Master, may I have that stone or is it not for sale?" "Everything is for sale, even the shop," answered Beauty-Spot. "Will you take eighty thousand dinars for the thing?" asked the captain.

"By Allah," thought Beauty-Spot, "this trinket must be extraordinarily valuable. I will make difficulties." So he answered: "An excellent jest, my good sir; why, I paid a hundred thousand for the thing myself." "Then will you sell it for that price?" asked the other, and Beauty-Spot replied: "I will, to oblige you." The captain thanked him, saying: "I have not all that money about me; it would be dangerous to carry so much among the thieves of Alexandria. If you will come on board with me, I will pay you and throw into the bargain two pieces of cloth, two pieces of velvet, and two pieces of satin."

Beauty-Spot shut up his shop and followed the captain into his ship; begging him to wait on deck, the sailor went below to fetch the money, but he did not appear again and suddenly all the sails were set and the boat plunged out to sea like a gull. Seeing himself a prisoner upon the waters, Beauty-Spot was overwhelmed with consternation; but he was unable to appeal to any for help because no sailors were visible upon the ship and she seemed to move across the sea on some invisible impulsion.

He looked up from his perplexity to see the captain regarding him with a mocking smile, one hand twined in his beard. At last his captor said: "You are the Mussulman Beauty-Spot, son of Shamseddin of Cairo, at one time employed about the palace of the khalifat at Baghdad. In a few days we shall land at Christian Genoa and then we will see what fate awaits you." With that the strange mariner again disappeared.

Soon the ship dropped anchor in the port of Genoa, a city of the western Christians. At once an old woman came aboard, accompanied by two men, and asked for Beauty-Spot, who did not know what to think of these extraordinary happenings. Submissively he

followed the old woman through the city and came at last to a church which belonged to a monastery.

At the door of this sacred building, the old woman turned to Beauty-Spot, saying: "From this time forth consider yourself the servant of this church and of the monastery. Listen carefully to your duties: you will rise at dawn and go to the forest to cut wood; when you return you will wash the pavement of the church and of the monastery, shake the mats, sweep the two buildings, husk corn, grind it, make it into dough, and cook it in the oven; grind and cook a measure of lentils and fill three hundred and seventy trenchers with them, take one of these trenchers to each of the three hundred and seventy good monks; empty the three hundred and seventy pots of ordure which you will find in the cells, and then finish by watering the garden, filling the four fountain basins and all the water-butts along the wall. These things you should have finished every day by noon. You will spend your afternoons outside the church, compelling passers-by to enter and listen to the preaching; if they refuse, here is a heavy mace, surmounted by an iron cross, with which the king authorises you to stun them. In that way there will remain in our city only fervent Christians who will come here to be blessed by the monks. You may begin your work at once; be careful not to forget anything."

With that the old woman winked at him and departed.

Beauty-Spot said to himself: "As Allah lives, this is a strange business." Not knowing what to resolve, he entered the church and sat down upon a bench to puzzle out, if he could, the reasons for all that had happened to him.

At the end of an hour he heard a woman's voice

coming to him between the pillars and it was so beautiful that he forgot all his cares while listening to it. It caused all the birds of his soul to start singing; it fell upon his heart with that blessed relief which only lonely music can give. When he rose to find the singer, the voice ceased; but he saw the veiled figure of a girl coming towards him. When she reached him she said in a trembling voice: "Dear Beauty-Spot, it is long and long that I have dreamed of you. I give thanks to heaven that we have met at last, for now we can be married."

"There is no other God but Allah!" exclaimed Beauty-Spot, "this is a dream, and I shall soon wake up in my shop at Alexandria." "No, all this is real, my dear," answered the girl, "you are in Genoa, and I had you brought here by the sea captain who commands all the ships of my father the king. I am the princess Hosn-Mariam; I learned sorcery when I was young and it revealed to me both your existence and your beauty, so that I fell in love with you at first sight. See, here about my neck is the talisman which the captain himself placed in your shop to entice you aboard his ship. Very soon you shall have proof of its miraculous powers, but first let us get married. After that I will satisfy any desire which you may express." "O princess," cried Beauty-Spot, "will you promise that I may return to Alexandria?" "That will be easy," answered the girl; and at once a priest appeared and married them.

"You wish to return at once to Alexandria?" asked Princess Mariam when the ceremony was over. "As Allah lives I do," he answered; so she took the carnelian talisman and turned towards the sky that one of its faces on which a bed was engraved. She rubbed this representation with her thumb, saying: "In the

name of Sulayman, O carnelian, I order you to bring me a travelling bed!"

Hardly had the words been spoken when what should appear before them but a travelling bed, all complete with coverlets and cushions! They mounted upon it and lay down at their ease, while the princess turned upwards another face of her carnelian, one on which was engraved the figure of a bird, and said: "Carnelian, O carnelian, I conjure you in the name of Sulayman, to carry us safe to Alexandria, by the directest way!"

At once the bed rose in air without any jolting and, going out by the great window in the dome, sailed through the air more quickly than a bird, but with an easy and riding motion; and in less time than it takes to piss, came to earth in Alexandria.

At the very moment when they stepped from the bed, they saw coming towards them a man dressed in the garments of Baghdad, whom Beauty-Spot at once recognised as the captain of the guards, who had only just reached the city. They threw themselves into each other's arms, and the captain announced the discovery of the thief to Beauty-Spot and told him all that had happened in Baghdad during the fourteen years of his exile. He reserved to the last the exquisite tidings of the birth of Aslan, who was now the most accomplished cavalier in all the lands of the khalifat.

Beauty-Spot also told the whole of his remarkable story to the captain, who was enormously surprised by what he heard. "The Prince of Believers wishes to see you as soon as possible," he said, and Beauty-Spot replied: "Allow me first to go to Cairo, to kiss the hands of my father and mother and persuade them to return with me to the city of the khalifat."

The captain of the guards mounted on the bed with them, and all three were transported in the twinkling of an eye to that street in Cairo which is called Yellow, where the house of Shamseddin stood. They knocked at the door and the syndic's wife opened it herself, saying: "Who is there?" "It is I, your son Beauty-Spot," came the answer; so that the old woman, who had worn mourning for her son during long years, fainted in his arms for joy, and the elderly Shamseddin ran out and fell upon his neck.

All five rested for three days at the house and then got together upon the magic bed, which transported them to Baghdad, where the khalifat kissed Beauty-Spot as if he had been his own son and overwhelmed all three generations, Shamseddin, Beauty-Spot, and Aslan, with honours and lofty employments.

Beauty-Spot remembered that the prime cause of all his fortune was Mahmud Bilateral, who had not only ingeniously made him travel in the first place, but had also succoured him when he lay destitute upon the platform above the fountain. He set out to look for him and at last found him, seated in a garden, singing and drinking with a company of young boys. He invited him to the palace and had him appointed chief of police in the place of Ahmad-the-Moth.

When this obligation had been fulfilled, Beauty-Spot thanked Allah for all His favours and especially for the gift of a son as valiant and as handsome as little Aslan. He lived in Baghdad for years and years in more than mortal happiness with his three wives, Zobeida, Yasmine, and the Princess Mariam; until the Destroyer of Delights, the Ravisher of Friends, broke in upon his joy. Let us give praise to that Unalterable towards Whom the lives of all created things converge!

When Shahrazade had finished this story, she felt a little weary and became silent.

Then King Shahryar, who had listened with motionless attention, cried: "O Shahrazade, this tale of Beauty-Spot is indeed a remarkable one; Mahmud Bilateral and the broker Sesame, with his recipe for heating cold eggs, delighted me in the extreme. But I must admit that I was surprised at the paucity of poems in the story, for you have accustomed me to magnificent verses. Also some of the movements and desires of Bilateral seemed to me a little obscure; I should be charmed to hear any clearer explanations which you would care to give."

Shahrazade smiled slightly and looked at little Doniazade, who appeared extremely amused, before she answered: "Seeing that this little one can hear everything, I would rather, O auspicious King, recount to you one or two of the Adventures of the Poet Abu Nowas, the most delicious, the most charming, and the most spiritual of all the singers who have ever been in Irak and Arabia."

Little Doniazade rose from the carpet where she had been crouching and threw herself upon her sister's neck, crying: "O please begin at once, Shahrazade! Please, delightful sister!" Shahrazade answered: "With all my heart and as in duty bound to this most polished king."

But at this point she saw the approach of morning and therefore discreetly postponed her tale until the following night.

THE TALE OF SYMPATHY, THE LEARNED

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come

Little Doniazade waited until Shahrazade had finished her act with the King, and then raised her head, crying: "O sister, why do you not start at once the anecdotes which you promised us concerning that delightful poet Abu Nowas, the khalifat's friend, the sweetest singer in Irak and Arabia?" Shahrazade smiled at her sister, saying: "I only wait the King's permission before telling you some of the adventures of Abu Nowas, who was not only an exquisite poet but a notorious evil-liver."

Doniazade ran to her sister and embraced her, saying: "What did he do? Tell us at once, if you please."

But King Shahryar turned to Shahrazade and said: "O Shahrazade, it would give me great pleasure to hear one or two of these adventures, for I am sure that they are most entertaining; but tonight my mind is more inclined to higher things and would rather hear words of wisdom from you. If you know some tale which can fortify our souls with moral precepts and help us to profit by the experience of the wise, do not scruple to begin at once. Afterwards, if my patience be not exhausted, you may recount the adventures of Abu Nowas."

Shahrazade hastened to reply: "By chance, I have

been thinking all day, O auspicious King, of a story which concerns a girl who was called Sympathy, a slave unequalled both in beauty and learning; I am ready to tell you all that I have heard of what she did and what she knew."

"As Allah lives," cried King Shahryar, "you may begin at once; for nothing pleases me more than to learn wisdom from the lips of beauty. I hope that the tale will satisfy and profit me with an example of that learning which becomes a faithful Mussulman woman."

Shahrazade reflected for a short time and then raised her finger, saying:

IT IS RELATED—but Allah is all-wise and all-knowing—that there was once a very rich merchant in Baghdad, who had honour and privilege of every kind, but whom Allah had deprived of one happiness. He had no child, not even a daughter. He grew old in sorrow, seeing his bones becoming more and more transparent, his back more and more arched, without being able to obtain any consoling result from his numerous wives. One day, however, after he had distributed a great alms, visited santons, fasted and prayed fervently, he lay with his youngest wife and, by Allah's grace, got her with child.

At the end of nine months to a day she bore him a man-child as fair as a fragment of the moon; so that the merchant in gratitude to Allah entertained the poor, the widow, and the orphan for seven whole days, and then named his son Abu Al-Husn.

The child was carried in the arms of nurses and beautiful slaves, cared for like some jewel of price by all the women, until he reached the age when he might begin to learn. Then wise masters were given to him,

who taught him the wonderful words of the Koran, beautiful writing, poetry, arithmetic, and especially the science of shooting with the bow.

Not only was his education finer than that of any other child then living, but his beauty was almost a magic thing. His boyish graces, the fresh colour of his cheeks, the flowers of his lips, and the young down of his face were thus celebrated by a poet:

Though spring has passed already over the rose-trees,
Here are some buds not fully opened yet,
In this sweet garden ignorant of weather:
See, the down feather
Of the violet
Under those trees!

Young Abu Al-Husn was his father's joy and the light of his eyes during the old man's remaining term upon this earth. When he felt that his debt was about to be paid to Allah, he called his son to him, saying: "My child, quittance nears and I have nothing left to do but prepare myself to stand before the Master. I leave you great riches; money and goods, rich fields and farms, which should last your lifetime and the lifetime of your children's children. Enjoy your property without excess, thanking the Giver and being mindful of Him all your days." With that the old merchant died, and his son shut himself in with grief, after superintending his father's funeral.

Soon, however, his friends led him away from his sorrow and persuaded him to go to the hammam and change his garments, saying: "He who is born again in a son like you does not die. Have done with tears; make the most of your riches and your youth."

So Abu Al-Husn little by little forgot the counsels

of his father and learnt to look upon happiness and gold as inexhaustible. He satisfied every caprice of his nature, frequenting singers and musicians, eating enormous quantities of chicken every day (for he was very fond of chicken), unsealing old jars of strong wine, and hearing ever about him the noise of chinking goblets. He exhausted all that he could exhaust and spent all that he could spend, until he woke one morning to find that there remained of all his possessions only a single slave girl.

But here you must pause to admire the workings of Fate, who had decreed that this one remaining slave should be the supreme marvel of Western and Eastern women. She was called Sympathy; and never had a name been better given. She was as upright as the letter *alif*, and her figure was so slim that she might defy the sun to cast a shadow by her; the colouring of her young face was wonderful, and its expression was both fortunate and filled with blessing. Her mouth seemed to have been sealed with the seal of Sulayman to guard the pearls within; the two pomegranates of her breasts were separated by a valley of shadows and delights; and her navel was carved so deep that it would have held an ounce of nutmeg butter. Her reed-like waist ended in so heavy a croup that she left deep prints of it in every sofa and mattress which she used. A certain poet had her in mind when he wrote:

If you can call the sun and the moon and the rose-tree Sad-coloured,
Call her sad-coloured also.

Hearts beat the advance as as she advances,
And the retreat when she retreats.

The river of life flows through the meadows of Eden.
And the meadows of Eden are below her garment,
The moon is beneath her mantle.

Her body is a song of colours:
Carnation of roses answers to silver,
Black ripe berries
And new-cut sandal-wood
Are one note.

The man who takes her is more blessed
Than the God who gives her;
And He is continually called blessed.

Such was the slave Sympathy, the last possession of the prodigal Abu Al-Husn of Baghdad.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come

She said:

Seeing that he was ruined for ever Abu Al-Husn fell into a desolation which robbed him of both hunger and sleep; for three days and three nights he refused food and drink and sleep, so that the slave Sympathy thought that he was on the point of dying and determined to save him at any cost to herself.

She put on the rest of her jewels and those robes which remained most fit to be seen; then she went to her master and said with an encouraging smile: "Allah will put an end to your misfortunes by my

help. You have only to take me with you to the Commander of the Faithful, Haroun Al-Rachid, fifth of the line of Abbas, and offer me to him for ten thousand dinars. If he objects that the price is too high, you must say: 'Prince of Believers, this girl is worth more; as you will discover if you put her to the proof. You will find that she is without equal or near equal and worthy to serve the khalifat.' " She finished by recommending that he should not bate his price on any consideration.

Abu Al-Husn had neglected, in his careless way, to notice the supreme gifts of his beautiful slave; therefore he merely thought that the idea was not a bad one and held some chances of success. He led Sympathy into the presence of the khalifat without delay, and repeated the offer which she had recommended to him.

The khalifat turned towards her, asking: "What is your name?" "I am called Sympathy," she answered, and he continued: "O Sympathy, are you indeed learned, and can you tell me the various branches of knowledge in which you excel?" "My master," she answered, "I have studied syntax, poetry, civil and canon law, music, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, the law concerning inheritance, the art of elucidating grimoires and reading ancient inscriptions. I know the Sublime Book by heart and can read it in seven different ways; I know the exact number of its chapters, verses, divisions, parts, and combinations; how many lines, words, consonants, and vowels there are in it; I know which are the inspired chapters written at Mecca and those which were dictated at Medina. I know both laws and dogmas, and can determine the degrees of authenticity among them

from the point of tradition; I am acquainted with architecture, logic, and philosophy; with eloquence, language, rhetoric, and the rules of versification. I know every artifice by which words can be ordered into musical lines. I am equally at home in the construction of simply flowing verses and very complicated examples suited for subtle palates alone; if I introduce an occasional obscurity into my compositions, it is to hold the attention and to delight such minds as can disentangle a fragile thread. I have learnt many things and remembered all I have learnt. I can sing perfectly, dance like a bird, play the lute and the flute, and perform in fifty different ways on every stringed instrument. When I dance and sing, those who see and hear me are damned by my beauty; when I walk in my perfumed clothing, balanced upon my feet, I kill; when I move my bottom, I overthrow; when I wink, I pierce; when I shake my bracelets, I make blind; I give life with a touch, and death by going away; I am skilful in all the arts and have carried my education so far that only those who have worn out their life in study may see it, as it were, upon the far horizon."

Haroun Al-Rachid was delighted and astonished to find so much eloquence and beauty in the child who stood before him with lowered eyes. He turned to Abu Al-Husn, saying: "I shall send at once for all the masters of art and science in my kingdom, to put the knowledge of your slave to public proof. If she comes victorious from the trial, I will not only give you ten thousand dinars but cover you with honours for having brought so great a marvel to me. If she fail in her examination, she shall remain your property.

The khalifat straightway sent for the most learned man of that time, Ibraham bin Siyyar, a sage who had gone to the depths of all human knowledge; and he also commanded the presence of the chief poets, grammarians, theologians, doctors, philosophers, astronomers, and lawyers of his kingdom. They hastened to the palace and assembled in the great hall, without knowing why they had been summoned. They seated themselves in a circle upon carpets about the khalifat's golden chair, while Sympathy stood meekly in their presence, smiling upon them through her light veil.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come

She said:

When a silence had fallen upon this assembly so deep that the far-off fall of a needle upon the ground might have been heard, Sympathy made a graceful and dignified bow to those present and said to the khalifat in a melodious voice:

"Prince of Believers, it is for you to order and for me to obey; I stand ready to answer any question posed to me by these venerable sages, these readers of the Koran, lawyers, doctors, architects, astronomers, geometrists, grammarians, philosophers, and poets."

Haroun Al-Rachid turned to those who were about him, saying: "I have called you hither that you may examine the learning of this girl in all directions and

to any depth; it is for you to spare no pains in exhibiting your own scholarship and erudition." All the sages bowed to the earth, carrying their hands to their eyes and foreheads and answering: "Obedience and obeisance to Allah and to you, O Prince of Believers!"

The slave Sympathy stood for some moments in thought with lowered head; then she looked up, saying: "Tell me, my masters, which of you is the most learned in the Koran and the traditions of our Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!)?" All fingers were pointed to one of the doctors, who rose, saying: "I am that man." Then said Sympathy: "Ask me what you will of your own subject." So the learned reader of the Koran said:

"O young girl, since you have studied the sacred Book of Allah, you must know the number of the chapters, words, and letters in it; and also the precepts of your faith. Tell me first who is your Lord, who is your Prophet, who is your Imam, what is your orientation, what is your rule of life, what is your guide, and who are your brothers?"

She answered: "Allah is my Lord, Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!) is my Prophet; the Koran is my law and therefore my Imam; that Kaaba, the house of Allah builded by Abraham at Mecca, is my orientation; the example of our holy Prophet is my rule of life; the Sunna, the collection of traditions, is my guide; and all Believers are my brothers."

While the khalifat marvelled to hear such precise answers from such lovely lips, the sage said:

"Tell me, how do you know that there is a God?"

She answered: "By reason."

"What is reason?"

"Reason is a double gift: it is both innate and acquired. Innate wisdom is that which Allah has placed in the hearts of His chosen servants that they many walk in the way of truth. Acquired wisdom is the fruit of education and labour in an intelligent man."

"That is an excellent answer. But can you tell me, where is the seat of reason?"

"In the heart, whence inspirations rise to the brain."

"That is so. How have you learnt to know the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!)?"

"By reading the Book of Allah, by the phrases contained therein, by the proofs and witnessings of His divine mission."

"What are the indispensable duties of our religion?"

"The indispensable duties of our religion are five: the profession of Faith: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the messenger of Allah!'; prayer, alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca when that is possible."

"What are the most praiseworthy acts of piety?"

"They are six in number: prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage, fighting bad instincts and forbidden things, to take part in a holy war."

"What is the aim of prayer?"

"To offer the homage of my virtues to the Lord, to celebrate His praises, and to lift my soul towards the calm places."

"Ya Allah! That is an excellent reply. Does not prayer necessitate certain indispensable preparations?"

"Certainly it does. It is necessary to purify the whole body by ritual ablutions, to put on garments

which have no stain of dirt, to choose a clean place in which to pray, to protect that part of the body which lies between the navel and the knees, to have pure intent, and to turn towards the Kaaba, in the direction of holy Mecca."

"What is the value of prayer?"

"It sustains faith, of which it is the foundation."

"What is the fruit or utility of prayer?"

"True prayer has no terrestrial use; it should be regarded only as a spiritual tie between the creature and his Lord. It can produce ten immaterial results; it lights the heart, it brightens the face, it pleases the Compassionate, it infuriates the devil, it attracts pity, it repels evil, it preserves from ill, it protects against enemies, it fortifies the wavering spirit, and brings the slave nearer to his Master."

"What is the key of prayer? And what is the key of that key?"

"The key of prayer is ablution and the key of ablution is the preparatory formula: 'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.'"

"What are the prescribed usages of ablution?"

"According to the orthodox rite of the imam Al-Shafi'i bin Idris, there are six: the fixed intention to purify oneself in order to be agreeable to the Creator; first washing the face, washing the hands to the elbows, rubbing part of the head, washing the feet from nails to heels, and a strict regard to the order in which these things are done. That order demands the observance of twelve clear conditions: to pronounce the preparatory formula: 'In the name of Allah!' to wash the palms of the hands before plunging them into the basin, to rinse the mouth, to wash the nostrils by snuffing up water from the hand, to rub all the head, to clean the outside and inside of the ears with new

lots of water, to comb the beard with the fingers, to twist the fingers and toes until they crack, to place the right foot before the left, to repeat each ablution three times, to pronounce the act of faith after each ablution and, when the whole ablution is finished, to recite this pious formula: 'O God, number me among the pure, the repentant, and the faithful! Praise be to God! I testify that there is no God but You! You are my refuge, and it is from You that I sincerely beg pardon for my sins. Amen.' It was this formula that the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) recommended us to recite, saying: 'For him who uses this prayer, I will open the eight gates of Eden and he may enter by which he pleases.' "

"That is truly an admirable reply. But can you tell me what the angels and devils are doing while a man is practising ablution?"

"When a man prepares to make ablution the angels come to stand on his right side and the devils on his left; but as soon as he pronounces the preparatory formula: 'In the name of Allah!' the devils take flight and the angels come nearer, holding a square pavilion of light above his head by the four corners, singing praises to Allah, and interceding for the remission of the man's sins. If he forgets to pronounce the name of Allah, or omits it in the course of his ablution, the devils crowd back upon him and do their best to trouble his soul, to suggest doubts, and to cool the fervour of his spirit."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come

She said:

Sympathy continued: "It is obligatory for the man to let the water run all over his body, over all his hairs, seen or hidden, and over his private parts. To rub all parts of the body well, and not to wash the feet till last."

"That is well answered. Now can you tell me what usages are to be observed in the ablution which is called Tayammum?"

"Tayammum is purification with sand and dust. It is practiced on seven occasions decreed by the practice of the Prophet; and following four specific indications of the Book itself. These seven occasions are: lack of water, fear of exhausting the water, need of the water for drinking, fear of losing some of the water while carrying it, diseases which make the use of water dangerous, fractures which demand a reclining position, and wounds which much not be touched. The four necessary conditions are these: to be of good faith, to take the sand or dust in the hand, make as if to rub the face with it, to imitate the action of rubbing the arm as far as the elbow, and to wipe the hands. Two practices are recommended as they conform to the Sunna: to begin the ablution with the formula: 'In the name of Allah!' and to make ablution of all the right parts of the body before the left."

"That is quite right. Let us return for a moment to prayer; how should it be made and what acts are suitable for it?"

"The acts requisite for prayer are the columns

which bear it up. The columns of prayer are: the formula of the Takbir, which consists in pronouncing the words: 'Allah is the Greatest!'; recitation of the Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Koran; prostration with the face against the earth; to rise; to make the profession of faith; to sit upon the heels; to pray for the Prophet, saying: 'Upon him be the prayer and peace of Allah!'; to remain ever in a pure intent. Other conditions of good prayer are taken from the Sunna, and consist in: lifting the two arms with the palms upwards in the direction of Mecca, reciting the Fatiha a second time, reciting another chapter of the Koran, for instance that of the Cow, pronouncing certain other pious formulas, and finishing with further prayers for our Prophet Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!)"

"You have given a perfect answer. Now can you tell me in what various ways one may pay the tithe of alms?"

"It may be paid in fourteen ways: in gold, silver, camels, cows, sheep, corn, barley, millet, maize, beans, chickpeas, rice, raisins, and dates. If one has less than twenty dirhams of Mecca gold there is nothing to be paid; above that sum the rate is three per centum. The same proportion obtains with silver. A sheep is paid for every five camels; a camel for every twenty-five camels, and so on. One in forty is paid of sheep and lambs, and the same of all other commodities which I have named."

"Speak to me now of fasting."

"To fast is to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual enjoyment until sunset on every day of Ramadan till the new moon is seen. It is excellent during a fast to abstain from all trifling discourse and from all reading not of the Koran."

"Are there not certain things which seem at first sight to vitiate a fast, but which the Book tells us do not vitiate it?"

"Those things which do not break a fast are: pomades, balms, and unguents; kohl and collyriums for the eyes, dust of the road, swallowing the spittle, involuntary swallowing of food by day or by night; glances cast at a woman who is not a Mussulman, blood-letting and cupping.

"How would you define spiritual retreat?"

"Spiritual retreat is long dwelling in a mosque without leaving it for any purpose save evacuation, abstention from women, and from speech. It is recommended by the Sunna but is not an obligation of dogma."

"Speak now of pilgrimage."

"Pilgrimage to Mecca is a duty which every Mussulman should accomplish at least once in his life after he has attained the age of reason. Certain conditions must be observed: to wear the pilgrim's garment, to avoid all commerce with women, to shave the hairs, to cut the nails, and to cover the head and the face. The Sunna also prescribes certain other observances."

"Now let us pass to the subject of holy wars."

"A holy war is that undertaken against the Infidels when Islam is in danger. It may only be fought for defensive purposes, never offensive; when the Believer is in arms, he must march straightforward and never retreat."

"Can you give me some details of buying and selling?"

"In buying and selling both sides must be free and, in cases of sufficient importance, should draw up an act of consent and acceptation."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

Sympathy continued: "The Sunna prohibits the sale of certain things. For example: it is expressly considered unlawful to exchange dry dates for fresh dates, dry figs for fresh figs, salt meat for fresh meat, salt butter for fresh butter, and, generally speaking, the fresh and new of any commodity for the old, salt, and dried of the same."

When the learned commentator of the Book heard Sympathy's answers, he could not but admit to himself that she knew as much as he did; but, being unwilling to confess his inability to catch her out, he asked her the following subtle question: "What is the linguistic meaning of the word *ablution*?"

"To get rid of all internal or external impurity by washing."

"What is the meaning of the word to *fast*?"

"To abstain."

"What is the meaning of the word to *give*?"

"To enrich oneself."

"To go on a *pilgrimage*?"

"To attain the end."

"To make *war*?"

"To defend oneself."

The sage rose up, crying: "In truth I am short of questions and arguments. This slave astonishes me with her knowledge and the clearness of her exposition, O Commander of the Faithful!"

Sympathy smiled slightly, saying: "I would like, in my turn, to ask you one question: can you tell me what are the foundations of Islam?"

He reflected for a moment, and then replied: "They are four in number: faith illuminated by sane reason; righteousness; knowledge of duty and equity, together with discretion; and the fulfilment of all promises."

Sympathy said again: "Allow me to ask you a further question. If you cannot answer it, it will be my right to take away the distinctive garment which you wear as a learned reader of the Book."

"I accept," he answered, "put your question, O slave."

"What are the branches of Islam?" she asked.

After a long time spent in reflection, the wise man could not answer, so the khalifat said to Sympathy: "If you can give us the answer yourself, the gown belongs to you."

Sympathy bowed and answered: "The branches of Islam are twenty: strict observance of the Book's teaching, conformation with the traditions and oral instructions of the Prophet, the avoidance of injustice, eating permitted food, never to eat unpermitted food, to punish evil-doers that vice may not increase owing to the exaggerated clemency of the virtuous, repentance, profound study of religion, to do good to enemies, to be modest, to succour the servants of Allah, to avoid all innovation and change, to show courage in adversity and strength in time of trial, to pardon when one is strong, to be patient in misfortune, to know Allah, to know His Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!), to resist the suggestions of the Evil One, to fight against the passions and wicked instincts of

the soul, to be wholly vowed in confidence and submission to the service of Allah."

When the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid heard this answer, he ordered the sage's gown to be stripped from him and given to Sympathy; this was immediately done and the learned man left the hall in confusion, with his head bowed.

Then a second theologian, famous for his subtlety, to whom all eyes voted the honour of next questioning the girl, rose and turned towards Sympathy, saying: "I will ask you only a few short questions, O slave. What duties are to be observed while eating?"

"In eating a man must first wash his hands and invoke the name of Allah. He must sit upon the left haunch and use only the thumb and two first fingers in conveying the food to his mouth. He must take small mouthfuls, masticate each piece of food thoroughly, and not look at his neighbour for fear of embarrassing him and spoiling his appetite."

"Can you tell me what is something, what is half something, and what is less than something?"

"A Believer is something, a hypocrite is half something, and an Infidel is less than something."

"That is correct. Now can you tell me where faith is found?"

"Faith abides in four places: in the heart, in the head, in the tongue, and in the members. The strength of the heart consists in joy, the strength of the head in knowledge of the truth, the strength of the tongue in sincerity, and the strength of the members in submission."

"How many hearts are there?"

"There are several: the heart of the Believer is a pure and healthy heart, the heart of an Infidel is exactly the opposite. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

"There is a heart attached to the things of this world and a heart attached to spiritual joys; there is a heart mastered by the passions, by hate or avarice; there is a slack heart, a heart burning with love, a heart puffed with pride; there is a lighted heart like that of the companions of our holy Prophet; and there is the heart of the Prophet himself, which is the heart of the Chosen."

When the learned theologian heard this answer, he cried: "You have won my approbation, O slave!"

Sympathy looked at the khalifat, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, allow me to ask one question of my examiner and to take his gown if he cannot answer." Haroun Al-Rachid gave his permission, and she asked:

"Can you tell me what duty must be fulfilled before all other duties, however important those may be?"

The wise man did not know what to say, so the girl took his gown from him and herself answered the question:

"The duty of ablution; for we are bidden to purify ourselves before fulfilling the least of religious duties or any of those acts prescribed by the Book or the Sunna."

Sympathy cast a glance round the assembly, which was answered by one of the most celebrated men of the

century, supposed without equal in a knowledge of the Koran. He rose and said:

"Since you know the Book of Allah, O girl full of the sweet perfume of the spirit, can you give me a sample of your study?"

"The Koran is composed of a hundred and fourteen chapters, seventy of which were dictated at Mecca and forty-four at Medina. It is divided into six hundred and twenty-one divisions, called *ashar,* and into six thousand two hundred and thirty-six verses. It contains seventy-nine thousand four hundred and thirty-nine words, and three hundred and twenty-three thousand six hundred and seventy letters, to each of which attach ten special virtues. The names of twenty-five prophets are mentioned: Adam, Noah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Elisha, Jonah, Lot, Salih, Hud, Shuayb, David, Solomon, Zul-kafl, Idris, Elias, Yahya, Zacharias, Job, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, and Muhamad (upon all these be prayer and peace!). Nine birds or winged beasts are mentioned: the gnat, the bee, the fly, the hoopoe, the crow, the grasshopper, the ant, the bulbul, and the bird of Jesus (upon whom be prayer and peace!), which is none other than the bat."

"You are marvellously exact. Now can you tell me in what verse our holy Prophet judges the Unbelievers?"

"In this verse: 'The Jews say that the Christians are wrong and the Christians say that the Jews are wrong'; to this extent both are right!"

"How did the Koran come from Heaven to earth? Did it descend complete in its present form, copied from tablets which are kept in Heaven? Or did it descend on different occasions?"

"The angel Gabriel, commanded by the Master of the universe, carried it to our prophet Muhamad, the

prince of the messengers of God, a few verses at a time, according to circumstances, throughout the space of twenty years."

"What companions of the Prophet were careful to assemble all the scattered verses of the Koran?"

"Four of them: Abi bin Kaab, Zayd bin Tabit, Abu Obaydah bin Al-Jarrah, and Othman bin Affan (Allah have all four in His keeping!)."

"Who were those who handed down and taught the true way of reading the Koran?"

"There were four of them: Abdalla bin Masud, Abu bin Kaab, Maaz bin Gabal, and Salim bin Abdalla."

"On what occasion did the following verse descend from Heaven: 'O Believers, do not deprive yourselves of earthly joys in all their fullness'?"

"When certain of the companions wished to push asceticism too far and had resolved to geld themselves and wear hair-shirts."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-seventy-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

The learned questioner could contain himself no longer, but cried out: "I bear witness, O Prince of Believers, that this young girl is unequalled in knowledge!"

Sympathy demanded leave to ask a question in her turn, and said:

"Can you tell me which verse of the Koran contains

the letter *kaf* twenty-three times, which contains the letter *mim* sixteen times, and which contains the letter *ayn* forty times?"

The sage stayed with his mouth open, unable to make the least attempt at an answer; so Sympathy first took away his gown and then herself indicated the required verses to the general stupefaction of all.

Next the learned doctor of medicine rose in the assembly, one famous for the studies he had made and the books he had written, and said:

"You have spoken excellently of the things of the spirit; now it is time that we turn our attention to the body. I require you, O beautiful slave, to give us some information about the body of man, its composition, its nerves, its bones, its vertebræ, and why Adam was called Adam?"

"The name of Adam comes from the Arabic word *adim,* which signifies the surface of the earth; it was given to the first man because he was created from earth taken from different parts of the world. His head was made from the soil of the East, his breast from the soil of the Kaaba, and his feet from the soil of the West. Allah made seven entrances and two exits for the body: the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, and the mouth for entrances, and for exits, one before and one behind. Then the Creator united in Adam four elements to give him a nature: water, earth, fire, and air; so that a bilious temperament is of the nature of fire, which is hot and dry; a nervous temperament is of the nature of earth which is dry; a lymphatic temperament is of the nature of water which is cold and moist; and a sanguine temperament is of the nature of air, which is warm and dry. After this Allah assembled the human body. He placed within it three hundred and sixty ducts and two hun-

dred and forty bones. He gave it three instincts: of life, reproduction, and appetite. He gave it a heart, a spleen, lungs, six intestines, a liver, two kidneys, a brain, and parts of reproduction. He dowered it with five senses, guided by seven vital spirits. As for the position of the organs, he placed the heart upon the left of the breast, and the stomach below it, the lungs to act as fans for the heart, the liver on the right to guard the heart, and, for the same purpose, he placed the interlacing intestines and the articulation of the ribs. The head is composed of forty-eight bones, the chest of twenty-four ribs and twenty-five in a woman; this extra rib is on the right and is useful to fasten the child in the belly of its mother.

"Can you tell us anything concerning the symptoms of diseases?"

"The symptoms of diseases may be divided into exterior and interior; they show not only the kind but the gravity of the illness. A man skilled in his art can divine what is the matter by simply feeling the hand of his patient and determining its degree of dryness, heat, stiffness, cold, or moisture. A man whose eyes are yellow is suffering from a disease of the liver; and a man whose back is bent has serious inflammation of the lungs. Interior symptoms which guide a doctor in his diagnosis are: vomiting, pains, swellings, excrements, and the urine."

"What causes illness in the head?"

"Illness in the head is due principally to diet, to filling the stomach again before the previous meal is digested, and to eating when the patient is not hungry. Gluttony is the cause of every disease which afflicts the world. He who would live long should practise sobriety, should get up early, should avoid late nights

and excess with women, and not abuse the practices of blood-letting and cupping. Above all he should set a watch upon his belly. To do this it is necessary to divide the belly into three parts, to fill one with food, one with water, and one with nothing at all; this third part should be left free for breathing and as a lodging for the soul. The same division should be made with the intestine, which is eighteen spans long."

"What are the symptoms of icterus?"

"Icterus, that is to say feverish jaundice, is characterised by yellow colouring, bitterness in the mouth, vertigo, quick pulse, vomiting and indifference to women. A man who has this disease is in grave danger of intestinal ulcers, pleurisy, dropsy, swellings, and acute melancholia, which, by weakening the body, may bring on cancer and leprosy."

"That is perfectly answered. How would you divide medicine?"

"I would divide medicine into two parts: the study of diseases and the study of remedies."

"What would you say was the best water?"

"Fresh pure water contained in a jar of porous clay which has been rubbed with some healthy perfume, or simply scented with incense smoke. One should never drink until well after a meal. One may avoid all kinds of illness by this abstention and also put into practice this precept of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!): 'The stomach is the cradle of all disease, constipation is the cause of all disease, and cleanliness is the principle of all cures.'"

"What meats are especially excellent?"

"Those which are prepared by a woman, which do not cost you much, and are eaten with a quiet heart. That food which is called *tharid,* meat and bread sopped in broth, is certainly the most delicious of all

sustenance; for the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) has said: *'Tharid* is the best of meats as Ayisha is the most virtuous of women."

"What do you think of fruit?"

"Fruit and mutton are the healthiest foods. But the former should not be eaten after its season."

"Speak to us of wine."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come

She said:

Sympathy answered: "How can you ask me about wine when the Book is so explicit on the subject? It is forbidden in spite of its many virtues, because it troubles the reason and heats the humours of the body. Wine and games of chance are two things which the Believer should avoid under pain of serious calamity."

"That is a wise answer. Can you speak to us now of blood-letting?"

"Bleeding is necessary for all who have too much blood. It should be performed fasting, on a cloudless Spring day when there is neither rain nor wind. If practised on a Friday, especially when that day falls on the seventeenth of the month, it produces the best results. It advantages the head, the eyes, and the blood; but it is harmful when practised during great heat or great cold, while eating salted or acid things, or on a Wednesday or Saturday."

"So far there has been nothing lacking in your answers. Now I wish to ask you a question of capital

importance which will show if you have true knowledge of the facts of life. Can you give us a clear account of love making?"

On hearing this question the young girl blushed and lowered her head, so that the khalifat thought that she was unable to answer; but she turned towards him, saying: "As Allah lives, O Commander of the Faithful, my silence is not due to ignorance; for the answer is upon the tip of my tongue, but refuses to leave my lips because of my respect for the khalifat." Haroun Al-Rachid answered: "It would give me very great pleasure to hear such an answer from your mouth. Speak freely, explicitly, and without fear." So the learned Sympathy spoke as follows:

"Love making is that act which unites the sexes of man and woman. It is an excellent thing, having many virtues and conferring many benefits: it lightens the body and relieves the soul, it cures melancholy, tempers the heat of passion, attracts love, contents the heart, consoles in absence, and cures insomnia. These are its effects when a man makes love to a young woman. Connection with an old woman exposes a man to many maladies, among others: disease of the eyes, disease of the kidneys, disease of the thighs and disease of the back. In a word, it is a terrible thing, to be avoided as one would avoid a deadly poison. Best of all is to choose a woman expert in the art, one who understands a wink, who can speak with her feet and hands, and spare her owner the necessity of keeping a garden and flowerbeds.

"Concerning the physical nature of the act, the general facts are so widely known that it would be impertinent in me, O Commander of the Faithful, to speak of this matter before these venerable sages.

Effluence is the immediate effect of complete union. In a certain sense it may be said to be the cause of completion, paradoxical as this may seem. Yet, though I were to describe to you, for days without end, that which is familiar to us all, yet would we be no nearer to the truth of this great mystery of love and birth. This seed meets this seed and that which is is, but no man can truly say why.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

"You have answered wisely!" cried the sage. "I have only two more questions to ask. Can you tell me what thing lives always in prison and dies when it breathes the free air? Also, what are the best fruits?"

"The first is a fish: and the second, citrons and pomegranates."

When the doctor heard the wonderful replies of Sympathy, he confessed himself incapable of making her stumble and would have returned to his place, but Sympathy signed to him to remain, saying: "I will now ask you a question. Can you tell me what is round like the earth, and lives in an eye, sometimes going through that eye, and sometimes separated from it, existing without an organ, leaving its companion for the night, and embracing her again during the day, choosing its habitation upon the edge of things?"

The learned man cudgelled his brains for an answer but could find none, so Sympathy took away his gown and gave the answer herself: "The button and the button-loop."

After this an astronomer rose from among the old men and came to face the smiling eyes of Sympathy, which were brighter and more confusing than all the stars of night. He sat by her and said:

"Where does the sun rise and where does he set?"

"He rises from the rivers of the East and sets among the rivers of the West: there are a hundred and forty-four of these rivers. The sun is lord of the day and the moon is lady of the night. Allah said in the Book: 'I gave the sun his life and the moon her brightness, and fixed them in ordered places so that my people might calculate the days and years. I have marked a limit for the courses of the stars, forbidding the moon to attain to the sun, and the night to pass the day. Day and night, shadow and light, are complementary to each other for ever, but may never mingle!"

"That is an astonishingly exact reply. Can you speak to us of other stars, their good or evil influences?"

"If I spoke of all the other stars, we would need to sit here for more than one day. I will, therefore, answer briefly. Besides the sun and the moon, there are five planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The moon is cold and moist, exerting a good influence; she has Cancer for her house, the Bull for her apogee, the Scorpion for her descendant, and Capricorn for her perigee. The planet Saturn is cold and dry, exerting an evil influence; he has Capricorn and Aquarius for his house, the Scales for his apogee, the Ram for his descendant, and Capricorn and the

Lion for his perigee. Jupiter is warm and moist, exerting a good influence; he has the Fishes and the Collar for his house, Cancer for his apogee, Capricorn for his descendant, the Twins and the Lion for his perigee. Venus is temperate, exerting a good influence; she has the Bull for her house, the Fishes for her apogee, the Scales for her descendant, the Ram and the Scorpion for her perigee. Mercury has sometimes a good and sometimes a bad influence; his house is the Twins, his apogee Virgo, his descendant the Fishes, and his perigee the Bull. Last of all, Mars is hot and moist, wielding a malign influence; he has the Ram for his house, Capricorn for his apogee, Cancer for his descendant, and the Scales for his perigee."

Hearing this answer, the astronomer admired the depth of Sympathy's knowledge; therefore, wishing to trouble her with a more difficult question, he asked:

"O slave, do you think that we shall have rain this month?"

Sympathy hung her head and reflected for a long time; so that the khalifat thought that she was unable to answer. At length she raised her head, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, I will not speak unless I have your special permission to reveal all my thought." "You have that permission!" cried the astonished khalifat, and she continued: "Then, O Prince of Believers, I beg you to lend me your sword for a moment that I may cut off the head of this astronomer, who is an agnostic and an unbeliever."

At these words the khalifat and all the sages burst out laughing; and Sympathy went on: "I must teach you, O astronomer, that there are five things which only Allah knows: the hour of death, the fall of rain, the sex of a child in its mother's womb, what will happen tomorrow, and the place of death."

The astronomer answered smiling: "My question was asked to test you. Now, as we do not wish to prolong the discussion of this subject unduly, can you tell me the influence of the stars upon the days of the week?"

"Sunday is consecrated to the sun. When it begins the year, it is a sign that the people will suffer great tyranny and vexation from their sultans, kings, and governors; that there will be much drought in the land, that there will be hardly any lentils, that the vines will rot, and that ferocious wars will break out between kings. But Allah is all-wise. Monday is consecrated to the moon. When the year begins with a Monday, it is a good sign. There will be abundant rains with a sufficiency of corn and grapes; but there will also be pestilence; the cotton will be bad and linen will hardly grow at all; half of the cattle will die from disease. Tuesday is consecrated to Mars; if it begins the year, many of those great and powerful in the land will die, the price of all grains will rise, there will be little rain and small catches of fish. Honey will be expensive and lentils sell for nothing. Flax-seed will be very dear indeed, but there will be an excellent barley harvest. Much blood will be spilled, and a disease will break out among the donkeys, so that they will become worth a great deal of money. But Allah is all-knowing. Wednesday is the day of Mercury; when it begins the year, there will be great slaughters by sea with many storms and much lightning, grains will be dear, while radishes and onions will fetch almost any money. There will also be a disease among little children. But Allah is all-powerful. Thursday is consecrated to Jupiter: if it begins the year, that is a sign of concord among the people, of justice on the part of governors and wazirs, of integrity in the

doings of kadis, and general benefit for the human race; with abundance of rains, fruits, cereals, flax, cotton, honey, grapes, and fish. But Allah is all-knowing. Friday is the day of Venus; when Friday begins the year, there will be abundant dew and a beautiful Spring, but there will also be born an enormous number of children of both sexes; there will be many cucumbers, water-melons, pumpkins, tomatoes, and artichokes of both kinds. But Allah is all-knowing. Saturday is sacred to Saturn. Woe upon that year which begins with a Saturday! Woe upon that year! Heaven shall be greedy and earth shall be greedy; famine shall succeed to war, disease to famine; and the people of Egypt and of Syria shall utter great cries under the oppression and tyranny of their governors. But Allah is all-wise."

"That is a clear and comprehensive answer! Now can you tell us in what part or level of the sky the planets are hung?"

"The planet Saturn is hung in the seventh heaven, Jupiter in the sixth, Mars in the fifth, the sun in the fourth, Venus in the third, Mercury in the second, and the moon in the first heaven."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eighty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

"Now it is my turn to ask you a question," continued Sympathy. "What are the three classes of stars?"

The sage reflected for a long time with his eyes fixed upon the sky, but he could not save himself. Sympathy therefore possessed herself of his gown and answered her own question as follows:

"The stars are divided into three classes, according to their destined uses; some are fixed like torches in the celestial vault that they may light the earth, others are invisibly suspended in the air that they may illuminate the sea, and the third class of stars move at will between the fingers of Allah; we see them passing through the air at night, they are used to stone and punish all evils who would disobey the orders of the Highest."

When the astronomer confessed himself inferior to the charming slave and left the hall, the khalifat ordered a philosopher to take his place; this man confronted Sympathy, saying:

"Can you tell us the nature of infidelity and whether or no it is born with man?"

"I will answer in the very words of our Prophet, (upon whom be prayer and peace!): Infidelity circulates among the children of Adam as blood circulates in the veins; so that they blaspheme against the earth, against the fruits of the earth, and against the hours of the earth. The greatest of all crimes is to blaspheme against time and the world; for time is God and the world was made by God."

"Your answer is both sublime and correct. Now tell me the five creatures of Allah who ate and drank before they had ever defecated or made water?"

"These five creatures were: Adam, Simeon, Salih's dromedary, Ishmael's ram, and the bird which holy Abu Bakr saw in the cave."

"Tell me what five creatures rest in Paradise, being neither man, Jinni, nor angel?"

"The five are: Jacob's wolf, the dog of the seven sleepers, the ass of Esdras, Salih's dromedary, and Duldul, the mule of our sacred Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!)."

"What man prayed when he was neither on earth nor in Heaven?"

"Solomon prayed upon a carpet hanging in mid-air between heaven and earth."

"Explain the following: a man looked upon a woman slave in the morning and the act was unlawful, he looked upon her at noon, and it was lawful; he looked upon her in the afternoon and it was again unlawful; he looked upon her at sunset and it was lawful; he looked upon her at night and it was unlawful; he looked upon her next morning and it was lawful. Can you explain how such differing states could succeed each other so quickly in a day and a night?"

"The explanation is easy: the man looked upon the slave in the morning when she was not his, and therefore, according to the Book, to do so was not lawful; he bought her at noon and therefore could look at her as much as he liked; in the afternoon he gave her her freedom and therefore it was not lawful for him to look upon her; at sunset he married her and to look upon her became lawful, that and other things; in the night he thought fit to divorce her and therefore it was unlawful for him to come near her; in the morning he married her again, with the usual ceremonial and it was lawful for him to resume his relations with her."

"Can you tell me what tomb moved about with its contents?"

"The whale which took down the Prophet Jonah into its belly."

"What valley is it upon which the sun shone once

and will not shine again until the Resurrection?"

"The valley made in the waters of the sea by the staff of Moses, that his people might escape."

"What was the first skirt trailed upon the earth?"

"The skirt of the robe of Hagar, Mother of Ishmael, when she swept the earth before Sarah."

"What thing breathes and yet is lifeless?"

"The morning; for the Book says: 'When morning breathes. . . .'"

"Solve the following problem if you can: a flock of pigeons alighted upon a tree, some perching upon the upper branches and some upon the lower; those upon the upper branches said to those upon the lower: 'If one of you flies up to us our number will be double yours; if one of us flies down to you, our numbers will be equal.'"

"There were twelve pigeons in all, seven upon the upper branches and five upon the lower branches. If one of the lower ones joined the higher, there would be eight above, which would be the double of four; but if one of the seven flew down to the lower ones, there would be six in each position. But Allah is all-knowing."

When the philosopher heard these various answers, he feared that the girl would ask him something in her turn; therefore, as he was attached to his gown, he hastened from the hall.

Then rose the most learned man of all that century, Ibrahim bin Siyyar, and said to the fair Sympathy: "I am ready to hear you confess yourself vanquished and that it is unnecessary to question you further."

"O venerable sage," replied the girl, "I advise you to send for other garments than those which you have on, for in a few minutes I will have taken the latter from you."

"That remains to be seen. What are the five things which the All-Highest made before he created Adam?"

"Water, earth, light, darkness, and fire."

"The All-Powerful made everything by a simple output of His will except certain things which He made with His own hands. What were those things?"

"The Throne, the Tree of Paradise, Eden, and Adam. These four things He made with His own hands and the rest by saying: 'Let them be!' and they were."

"Who is your father in Islam and who is the father of that father?"

"My father in Islam is Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!), and the father of Muhamad is Abraham, the friend of God."

"In what does the faith of Islam consist?"

"In the simple profession of faith: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah.'"

"What thing began by being wood and ended by having life?"

"The staff of Moses which he threw to the ground and it became a serpent. This same staff could, according to circumstances, become a fruit-tree, or a great leafy tree to protect Moses from the heat of the sun, or a huge dog to watch the flock by night."

"Can you tell me what woman was engendered by man without having a mother? And what man was engendered by woman without having a father?"

"Eve who was born of Adam; and Jesus who was born of Mary."

"Tell me now of the different sorts of fire."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

"There is the fire of the world, which eats and does not drink; there is the fire of hell, which both eats and drinks; there is the fire of the sun, which drinks but does not eat; and there is the fire of the moon, which neither eats nor drinks."

"What is the answer to this riddle: When I drink, eloquence issues from my lips; I walk and I speak in silence; I am never honoured in my lifetime and after my death I am not regretted?"

"The answer is: a pen."

"And the answer to this riddle: I am a bird, and yet I have neither flesh, blood, feathers, nor down; I am eaten roast, boiled, or as I am; it is hard to say whether I am alive or dead; my colour is silver and gold."

"You have taken too many words to signify a simple egg. Ask me something more difficult."

"Exactly how many words did Allah say to Moses?"

"He said exactly one thousand five hundred and fifteen words."

"What is the origin of creation?"

"Allah made Adam from mud, mud from foam, foam from the sea, sea from the darkness, darkness from the light, light from a fish, the fish from a ruby, the ruby from a rock, the rock from water, and the water He made by saying: 'Let it be!' "

"Here is another riddle: I have neither mouth nor belly and yet I eat. I devour trees and animals; food keeps me alive but if I drink I die?"

"The answer is fire."

"Give me the answer to this riddle: There are two friends who have never enjoyed each other though they lie every night in each other's arms; they are the guardians of the house and only separate in the morning?"

"They are the two leaves of a door."

"Explain this: I drag long tails behind me; I have an eye but cannot see; I make many garments which I may not wear."

"That is a needle."

"What is the length and breadth of the bridge Sirat?"

"The bridge Sirat, over which all men must pass at the Resurrection, is three thousand years long, a thousand to climb, a thousand to cross, and a thousand to descend on the other side. It is sharper than a knife and narrower than a hair."

"How often may the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) intercede for a Believer?"

"Three times, neither more nor less."

"Who was the first to embrace the faith of Islam?"

"Abu Bakr."

"Then do you not believe that Ali was a Mussulman before Abu Bakr?"

"By the grace of the Highest, Ali was never an idolater; at the age of seven Allah led him into the true way and lightened his heart with the gift of the faith of Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!)."

"Excellent. . . . Now tell me, whom do you consider the more meritorious, Abu or Abbas?"

Sympathy perceived that the learned man wished to compromise her with this insidious question; for if she gave pre-eminence to Ali, the son-in-law of the

Prophet, she would displease the khalifat who was himself descended from Abbas, the uncle of Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!). First she blushed then she grew pale and, after a moment's reflection, answered: "There can be no question of pre-eminence between two persons of perfect merit."

When the khalifat heard this answer, he rose enthusiastically to his feet, crying: "By the Lord of the Kaaba, that is an admirable answer!"

The learned man continued: "Tell me the answer to this riddle: She is slim, tender, and of a delicate taste: she is as straight as a lance but has not a lance's sharpness: her sweetness is useful on an evening of Ramadan?"

"That is sugar-cane."

"I will ask you a series of questions quickly. Therefore answer shortly: 'What is sweeter than honey, what is sharper than a sword, what is quicker than poison, what is the joy of a moment, what is the good fortune which lasts three days, what is the happiest day, what is the joy of a week, what is the debt which even the wicked cannot escape paying, what pain follows us to the grave, what is the joy of the heart, what is the sorrow of the soul, what is the desolation of life, what is the ill without remedy, what is the shame which cannot be wiped out, what animal lives in desert places far from cities, avoiding man and uniting in itself the form and nature of seven beasts?"

"Before I answer, I demand your gown from you."

Then said Haroun Al-Rachid to Sympathy: "Your demand is just; but perhaps it would be better, having regard to his great age, to answer his questions first."

So she answered: "The love of children is sweeter than honey. The tongue is sharper than a sword.

The evil eye is quicker than poison. The joy of love lasts but for a moment. The joy of three days is the husband's rest during the monthly periods of his wife. The happiest day is that on which one gets the best of a bargain. The joy of a week is the joy of marriage. The debt which all must pay is death. The evil behaviour of our children follows us to the grave. Heart's joy is a woman submissive to her husband. A bad servant is the sorrow of the soul. Poverty is the desolation of life. Bad character is the evil without remedy. The dishonour of a daughter is a shame which cannot be wiped out. And the animal is the grasshopper, which has the head of a horse, the neck of a bull, the wings of an eagle, the feet of a camel, the tail of a serpent, the belly of a scorpion, and the horns of a gazelle."

Haroun Al-Rachid was edified in the extreme by so much knowledge and wisdom and ordered the learned Ibrahim bin Siyyar to give his own gown to the girl. The sage did so and then, lifting his right hand, witnessed publicly that the slave had surpassed him in scholarship and was a marvel of the age.

"Can you play upon instruments of music and accompany yourself while you sing?" asked the khalifat; and when Sympathy replied that she could, had a lute brought to her, which was contained in a red satin case with a tassel of saffron-coloured silk and a gold clasp. Sympathy drew the lute from its covering and found carved about it in interlaced and flowering characters, the following verses:

I was the green branch of a tree
Birds loved and taught their songs to.
Haply the teaching lingers,
For, when I lie on beauty's knee,

Remember under beauty's fingers,
The woodland song I sing belongs to
The birds who sang to me.

She leaned over the lute like a mother over her nursling and, drawing twelve different harmonies from the strings, sang in a voice that echoed long after in all hearts and brought tears of emotion to every eye.

When she had finished, the khalifat rose up, crying: "May Allah increase your gifts within you, O Sympathy, and have in His benign keeping those who taught you and those who gave you birth!" So saying he had ten thousand golden dinars, in a hundred sacks, given to Abu Al-Husn and then turned to Sympathy, saying: "Tell me, O child of marvel, would you rather enter my harem and have a palace and retinue for yourself, or return home with this young man?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

Sympathy kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands and answered: "May Allah continue to shower His blessings upon our master! Your slave would prefer to return to the house of him who brought her here."

Instead of being offended by this answer, the khalifat immediately gave Sympathy a further five thousand dinars, saying: "May you be found as expert in

love as you are in answering questions!" After this he put the crown upon his generosity by raising Abu Al-Husn to high employment and numbering him among his intimate favourites.

The two young people left the hall, one staggering under all the gowns of the sages, and the other under all the sacks of gold. As they went they were followed by the whole marvelling assembly, who lifted their arms, crying: "Was ever in the world a liberality like that of the descendants of Abbas?"

Such, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, were the answers given by Sympathy before the assembly of sages and handed down in the royal annals to be an instruction to every woman of the Faith.

Then Shahrazade, seeing that King Shahryar was still frowning and racking his brains, began at once upon the Adventures of the Poet Abu Nowas.

Little Doniazade, who had been half asleep, woke up suddenly on hearing the name of Abu Nowas and, large-eyed with attention, made ready to listen with all her ears.

AN ADVENTURE OF THE POET ABU NOWAS

It is related—but Allah is all-wise and all-knowing—that the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid was afflicted one night with lack of sleep and a preoccupation of spirit, so he went out alone from his palace and walked in the gardens to distract his weariness. He came at last to a pavilion whose door was open but guarded by a black eunuch who slept across the sill. The khalifat stepped over the body of the slave, and entering the single hall of the pavilion, saw a bed with lowered curtains, which was lighted on the right and left by tall

torches. Beside the bed stood a little table holding a jar of wine topped by an inverted cup.

Haroun Al-Rachid was astonished to find these things of which no one had informed him, so he lifted the curtains of the bed and stood stock-still with amazement at the sleeping beauty of a slave who lay there, as fair as the full moon, covered for sole garment with her fallen hair. He took the cup and filled it; then he drank slowly, saying beneath his breath: "To the roses in your cheeks, O child!" Setting down the cup, he leaned over the youthful face and dropped a kiss upon a little black mole which smiled on the left of the parted lips. Though this kiss was light as air, it woke the girl who recognised the Prince of Believers and jumped up in the bed. The khalifat calmed her fright, saying: "O young slave, there is a lute beside you which I am sure you can play charmingly. Give me a taste of your skill, for I am determined to pass the night with you, although I do not know you, and wish, as a preliminary, to hear your voice."

The girl took the lute and played upon it in twenty-one different modes, so that the khalifat was exalted with delight. Seeing the good impression that she had made, the young woman determined to profit by it, so she said: "O Prince of Believers, I suffer from the assaults of Destiny." "How is that?" asked the khalifat; and she continued: "Your son Al-Amin bought me a few days ago for ten thousand dinars, intending to give me as a present to your majesty; but your wife, the lady Zobeida, heard of his intention and, paying him back the money he had spent, gave me to a black eunuch with instructions to keep me a prisoner in this isolated pavilion."

The khalifat was annoyed when he heard this; so, after promising to give the girl a palace and a train

worthy of her beauty on the morrow, he hastened to waken the sleeping eunuch and ordered him to go at once to command the poet Abu Nowas to present himself at the palace. For you must know that Haroun Al-Rachid was always wont to send for the poet when he was in an evil humour, in order to distract himself with the improvised poems and rhymed adventures of that remarkable man.

The eunuch went to Abu's house and, not finding him there, searched throughout all the public places in Baghdad until he found him in a disreputable tavern at the lower end of the quarter of the Green Gate. He went up to him, saying: "O Abu Nowas, our master the khalifat sends for you." The poet laughed as he answered: "O father of whiteness, how am I going to leave this place when I am in pawn for a young boy?" "Where is he and who is he?" asked the eunuch; and Abu Nowas replied: "He is slender, beardless, and pretty. I promised him a thousand dirhams; as I have not the money about me I can hardly go away without paying."

"In Allah's name," cried the eunuch, "show me this boy and, if he is as delightful as you say you shall be excused and more than excused."

As they were talking in this way, the pretty pet put his head round the door and Abu Nowas exclaimed: "If the branch wavers so pleasantly, will not the song of the birds be beautiful?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When The Two-hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night Had Come

She said:

On this the boy came right into the room of the tavern; and indeed his beauty was wonderful; also he was dressed in three tunics, one on top of the other; white, red, and black.

Seeing him all in white, Abu Nowas felt the fire of inspiration sparkle in his soul and he improvised these verses:

His robe was white like milk,
His eyes love-heavy underneath blue lids,
His cheeks the shadow of wine-coloured silk
Thrown upon snow.
"What modesty forbids?
Why do you pass me so?
I am as patient for your hand
As a white lamb is patient for the priest."
"You sing three whites and I have four at least:
A destiny which would be white without you,
A body white and bland,
A face of white,
A garment blanched and exquisite.
You did not count my white aright
And so I flout you."

Hearing these lines the boy smiled and, taking off his white tunic, appeared all in brilliant red; so that Abu Nowas was again inspired, and sang without a pause:

His tunic was as red as cruelties.
"O child, you boasted white;

What is the meaning of this sight:
Two cheeks dyed in our broken hearts,
A garment stolen from anemones?"
"The dawn has lent me her attire,
The evening sun has put his clouds apart
And given me his fire,
Red are my cheeks' embroideries,
And red the veils which cling about my thighs,
Red is the wine which painted
Red lips where souls have fainted.
You have missed the addition of my red."
He said.

Delighted with this song, the minion threw aside his red garment and appeared in a black tunic which clung to his skin and outlined the charming waist which was girt in by a silken belt. Seeing him, Abu Nowas was exalted beyond reason, and sang again:

He would not look at me.
His tunic was as black as night
By no intrusive moon beguiled;
Therefore I said:
"Now I will get it right;
After the white and red,
After the red and white,
Black is the garden of your hair,
Black is your tunic everywhere,
Black are your eyes and black my destiny.
My computation shows no lack;
There's black and black and black on black."
He smiled.

When the eunuch had considered the beauty of these poems and of the boy who inspired them, he forgave

Abu Nowas in his mind and returned straightway to the palace, where he informed the khalifat that Abu was held in pawn at a tavern because he could not pay what he had promised to a delightful youth. The khalifat who was both amused and annoyed, sent back the eunuch with the sum of money required, bidding him bring the poet without delay.

The man hastened to the tavern and brought away the poet, who staggered a little from drink. When Abu Nowas had been supported into the presence of the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid lectured him in a voice which he strove to make furious; but, seeing that the poet burst out laughing, he took him by the hand and led him to the pavilion which the young girl occupied.

As soon as Abu Nowas saw her, seated upon the bed, dressed all in blue, and veiled with a light blue veil, smiling at him with great dark eyes, the fumes of wine left him and the fumes of inspiration took their place so that he improvised this poem:

I pray the blue veil of this girl:
By the white
Passing jasmin
You hide,
By the smile
Paling Pearl
You hide,
(Ah, what can the lass mean
Inside?
Ah, why is the nightwhile
Alight?)
To requite
All the guile
And the spite
Of that gossiping churl

With disdain,
Thus again and again
In my pain
I pray the blue veil of this girl.

The young woman gave wine to the khalifat, who invited the poet to empty the great cup himself. Abu Nowas took it off at a single draught and soon felt the effects of the heavy vintage. As he reeled where he stood, the khalifat rose in jest and fell upon him sword in hand, making as if to cut his head off. The poet ran hither and thither about the hall with great cries of terror and Haroun Al-Rachid pursued him into all the corners pricking him with the blade. At last, the khalifat cried: "Enough! return and drink another cup." At the same time he signed to the girl to hide the vessel. She immediately concealed it beneath her robe, but Abu Nowas saw the movement in spite of his drunkenness and sang:

Even as I desire the cup
The cup desires
Lips secret and more pleasant,
And has gone up
Within her garments hollow,
Whither the cup aspires
Abu would follow,
If only Haroun were not present.

The khalifat laughed consumedly and, as a further jest, said to the poet: "As Allah lives, I must raise you to some high employment. From this time forth, I appoint you accredited chief of all the procurators in Baghdad." "In that case, O Commander of the Faithful," retorted Abu Nowas with a grin, "what

may I have the pleasure of doing for you tonight?''

Haroun Al-Rachid flew into a rage and commanded the eunuch to call for Masrur the sword-bearer, his executioner of justice.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninetieth Night
Had Come

She said:

The khalifat ordered Masrur to strip Abu Nowas of all his clothes, to saddle him with an ass's pack-saddle, to pass an ass's halter round his neck, and to thrust a spur up his fundament. When this had been done, the unfortunate poet was led up and down before all the pavilions of the king's favourites that they might laugh at him; and Masrur had instructions, when this exhibition had been completed, to take Abu Nowas to the gate of the city, to cut off his head in the presence of the people, and to bring it back upon a dish.

The despairing poet was paraded before each of the three hundred and sixty-five palaces; and when their inhabitants heard of the death he was about to die, they grieved for him because they loved his wit, and as a sign of their sympathy, threw gold and jewels before his path. Then they came out of their dwellings and followed him with words of encouragement, so that the wazir Giafar Al-Barmaki, who was passing on his way to the palace, halted before the weeping man, and said: ''Is that you, O Abu Nowas? What crime have you committed to have earned so grave a

punishment?" "As Allah lives," answered Abu Nowas, "I have not committed even the suspicion of a crime. On the contrary I recited some of my most exquisite poems before the khalifat and he has rewarded me by giving me his own robe of honour."

The khalifat, who was hiding behind a curtain of the nearest pavilion, heard this answer and burst into a hearty laugh. He not only pardoned Abu Nowas, but gave him a real robe of honour and a large sum of money; also he continued to make him the inseparable companion of his black hours, as heretofore.

When Shahrazade had finished this tale of the poet Abu Nowas, little Doniazade, who had been endeavouring to stifle her silent laughter in the carpet, ran to her sister, crying: "As Allah lives, dear Shahrazade, that is a funny tale! I should have liked to see Abu Nowas disguised as an ass! Will you tell us some more stories about him?"

But King Shahryar cried: "I do not like this Abu Nowas at all. If you are quite determined to have your head cut off, you have but to continue telling me his adventures. If, on the other hand, you would save yourself and make the night pass pleasantly, tell me some story of travel; for since I journeyed into far countries with my brother Shahzaman, after cutting off the head of my wicked wife, I have taken great pleasure in the subject of voyages. If you know some delightful tale of this kind, begin at once; for my insomnia is very bad tonight."

The wily Shahrazade cried: "I agree that tales of travel are both more astonishing and more entertaining than all the stories which I have yet told. This you may judge for yourself, O auspicious King, for there is no tale in all the books comparable with that

of Sindbad the Sailor, and I am about to begin his adventures if you will give me leave."

Thus it was that Shahrazade told:

THE TALE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

It is related, O auspicious King, that there lived in Baghdad, during the reign of the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, a poor man called Sindbad the Porter, who earned his living by carrying loads upon his head. One day, as he was sweating and staggering in the great heat under a more than usually heavy burden, he passed the door of a house which seemed to him to belong to some rich merchant, as the ground about it was well swept and refreshed with rose-water. The breeze blew soft and cool there and a bench stood near the door for tired wayfarers, so Sindbad set his load upon the ground and sat down on the bench to breathe the scented air. He heard the concerted playing and singing of lutes and voices skilled in the craft of song, and the mingled jargonning of doves, nightingales, blackbirds, bulbuls, pigeons, and tame partridges, praising Allah in sweet modes. He marvelled in his soul and, for very pleasure, passed his head through the opening of the door and saw a great garden, filled with a press of slaves, servants, and guests, and furnished as only are furnished the gardens of kings.

The smell of admirable meats came to him, mingled with wafts of open wine; so that he could not help sighing and crying: "Glory be to the Creator and Giver of all things, who parts His gifts as it pleases Him! O my God, if I cry to You it is not to call Your justice and Your generosity in question, for the creature may not criticise the Master! but simply to witness what I have seen. Glory to be Him who makes

men high and lowly, for He has a reason, though we may not see it. The master of this house is very happy, living in a delight of odours, and meats and more than exquisite wines. He is joyous and calm, and there are others like him; while I am hot and tired and poor and miserable!"

Stirred to his depths by such thoughts, the porter made up these stanzas and sang them at the top of his voice:

I have heard of poor men waking
In the shadow of a palace,
But the solace
Of such waking
Is not for me.

I have seen the rich man's burden,
Heavy gold on gold increasing;
But the blessing
Of that burden
Is not for me.

Though more heavy than those others,
Is the load which makes me weary,
What I carry
Is for others,
Is not for me.

Yet when I have heard complaining
Of the equity of Allah,
I thank Allah
Such complaining
Is not for me!

When Sindbad the porter had finished singing, he rose and was about to take up his burden again when the door of the palace opened and a kind-faced little

slave, having an exquisite body sumptuously dressed, came up to him and took him by the hand, saying: "My master wishes to see you: follow me." The porter was afraid at this invitation and vainly tried to find some excuse for not going. At length he was constrained to leave his load with the door-keeper and follow the child into the interior of the building.

He saw a wonderful house filled with grave and noble people and, when he was led into the great central hall, came upon an honourable company of well-born guests. There were flowers of all kinds, perfumes of every sweetness, great selection of dry conserves, sweetmeats, almond paste, and rare fruits; there were innumerable dishes loaded with roast lambs and other delicate meat, and jars past counting full of wine from a chosen grape. There were fair slaves ranged in due order bending over lutes and, in the middle among the guests, sat a tall and dignified old man, with a white beard, a kind and handsome face, and an expression of calm nobility.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Come

She said:

The porter stood stock-still in his amazement, saying to himself: "As Allah lives, this must be the palace of some Jinni or some very mighty king!" He hastened to adopt the attitude demanded by polite breeding and, after wishing peace to all and calling down blessings upon them, stood modestly with lowered head.

The old man begged him to approach and sit down by his side; after a courteous speech of welcome, he had food and drink brought and not until his new guest had eaten, thanked Allah, and washed his hands, did he allow himself to put a question to him:

"Be very welcome; be at your ease; be happy upon this day! Will you allow me to ask your name and your trade?" "O master," replied the other, "I am called Sindbad the Porter, and I carry heavy loads for light payment." The master of the house smiled, saying: "O porter, your name is the same as mine; for I am called Sindbad the Sailor. . . . I requested you to come to me because I wished you to sing again those delightful stanzas which I heard you utter when you were sitting outside my door."

The porter was confused at this and hastened to say: "In the name of Allah, do not blame me too much for my inconsiderate singing, for grief, weariness, and misery may give birth to rudeness, foolishness, and insolence in the best of us." "Do not be at all ashamed to have sung in such a manner," said Sindbad the Sailor to Sindbad the Porter, "be perfectly at ease here for you are my brother. I pray you to sing your verses again, for they surprised me by their beauty."

The porter sang the song which you have already heard, and Sindbad the Sailor turned in delight to the singer, saying: "My destiny also makes a strange tale, which I will tell you. When you have heard all my adventures, you will understand what trials and vicissitudes I have had to undergo to reach the felicity of this palace; you will realise that I have had to purchase the wealth which sustains my age with strange and terrible labours, with calamities, misfortunes, and hardships which are scarcely credible. I have accom-

plished seven extraordinary voyages and the narrative of each one is enough to stupefy the listeners with an excess of marvel. And yet all that I tell you had been written for me by Destiny: for all things so written must inevitably come to pass."

THE FIRST VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

You must know, my noble guests, and you, O honourable porter who bear the same name as myself, that my father was a great merchant who wisely gave to the poor and, on his death, left me a considerable fortune in money, land, and villages.

These things came into my disposition when I reached manhood and straightway I set myself to eat strange meats and drink unusual wines, to frequent the youth of my own age, to wear each day a fortune upon my back in clothes, and to cultivate the art of friendship. For a long time I lived in this way thinking that nothing could abate my patrimony; until one morning I suddenly recovered my senses on finding that I had practically nothing left. I grew afraid lest I should have to pass my old age in poverty and called to mind certain words of our master, Sulayman, son of David (on whom be prayer and peace!) which my dead father was fond of repeating: *The day of death is better than the day of birth, a living dog is better than a dead lion, and the grave is better than poverty.*

Therefore I rose up and, collecting the little which remained to me of furniture and garments, I sold it at auction together with the small holdings and few acres which I had not spent; and thus gained the sum of three thousand dirhams."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-second Night
Had Come

She said:

With this sum I determined to travel, for I remembered the words of the poet:

What is success?
The deathless daughter
Of your weariness.
It is to dive in deeper, deeper water,
And ever deeper, layer on layer
Of cold green mystery,
For an ever rosier, ever whiter, ever greyer
Pearl of the sea.

I ran to the market and bought myself a lading of varied merchandise which I had carried on board a ship just starting from Baghdad with other merchants. Being determined to put to sea, I rejoiced to feel the boat dropping down stream from Baghdad to the port of Bassora.

From Bassora we sailed, day after day, night after night, over the sea, visiting island after island and land after land, selling or bartering our goods at each.

One day, after some weeks of sailing out of sight of land, we saw an island in the sea with such fair greenery that it appeared like one of the gardens of Eden. At once the captain made towards this delectable land and, when the anchor had been cast and the ladder lowered, allowed his passengers to disembark.

All of us merchants landed, carrying food and cooking utensils with us. Some lit fires and prepared a meal, others washed their linen, and others again contented themselves with resting or walking. I was among the last and, without neglecting either food or drink, found time to wander among the trees and take pleasure in the strange vegetation.

We were all occupied in these various ways, when the island suddenly shook throughout its length so violently that we were thrown to the ground. While we lay dazed, we saw the captain appear in the bows of his ship and heard him cry in an agonized voice with wild gesturings: "Save yourselves! Come aboard for your lives! That is no island but a gigantic whale! She has lived in the middle of this sea since time was young and the trees have grown in the sea sand upon her back. You have troubled her repose by lighting fires upon her; now she is moving! Come aboard for your lives, before she sinks in the water and destroys you all!"

Hearing these cries of the captain, the merchants left all they had; clothes, cooking pots, and ovens; and rushed towards the ship which was already weighing anchor. Some of them reached her in time, others did not; for the whale, after bounding terrifically two or three times, sank like lead in the water and involved those who were still upon her back beneath monstrous waves.

I was one of these last, but Allah saved me from drowning by guiding a piece of hollow wood towards me, a kind of large trough in which some of the passengers had been washing their linen. First I clung to it and then managed to get astride it by more than human efforts which danger and the dear love of life made possible for me. When I was well fixed, I

began to beat the water with my feet as if they had been sculls and made some progress, though my frail craft was canted to right and left by the force of the waves.

By this time the captain was making off with all sails set, leaving those who had not been able to reach the vessel to perish. I rowed as hard as I could with my feet after the disappearing ship until, when at last she dropped below the horizon and night fell, I gave myself up for lost. All that night and the next I fought against the sea and at last wind and wave brought me to the coast of a steep island covered with climbing plants which fell sheer down the face of the cliffs and trailed in the water. With immense labour of feet and hands I managed to climb up the branches and ropes of these plants until I reached the top of the cliff.

Being now certain of my safety, I examined the state of my body and found that not only was it covered with wounds and bruises, but that my feet were swelled and marred by bites of fishes who had filled their bellies with all of me which they could reach. Previous to this examination I had felt no pain, being rendered numb with fatigue and danger, but now I threw myself down on the earth of the island and was soon plunged in a deep swoon.

I remained thus without motion or consciousness until, on the second day, I was awakened by the sun beating down upon my face. I tried to rise, but my feet would not bear me and I fell back upon the ground. I felt in woeful case, but managed to drag myself, sometimes upon my feet and hands, sometimes walking with my knees, until I came at last to a plain covered with fruit trees and watered by pure streams.

There I rested for many days, eating and drinking, until my soul grew stronger and the pains of my body easier. At last I was able to move about with the help of a pair of wooden crutches which I made for myself; and I would spend my time hobbling among the trees, musing, eating fruit, and admiring the handiwork of All-Powerful Allah.

One day, as I went along the shore, I saw far off some thing which I took at first for a savage beast or some monster of the sea. Its appearance so interested me that although I was in two minds whether it was safe to do so, I went forward towards it. At last I could see that the animal was a mare of marvellous breed fastened to a stake upon the shore. She was so excellent a mount that I was on the point of going up quite close to her, when a sudden cry halted me where I was and a man sprang, as it were, from the earth and ran towards me crying: "Who are you? Where do you come from? What led you to venture into this place?"

"Good master," I answered, "I am a stranger who was voyaging on a ship and was cast into the sea with certain other passengers. Allah saved me by means of a wooden trough and I was thrown by the waves upon your shore."

The man took my hand, saying: "Follow me." So I followed him, and he led me down into a cave below the earth which contained a great hall where he caused me to sit in a place of honour and gave me food. I ate till I was satisfied; when my spirits were a little calmer, the man asked me for my story and I told it from beginning to end, to his great and unfeigned astonishment. "In the name of Allah, my master," I added, "do not blame me if I, who have told you the whole truth, now ask you why you dwell in this under-

ground cave and why that mare is fastened all alone on the sea shore."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come

She said:

The man answered: "There are many of us in this island, posted in different spots to look after the horses of King Mihrajan. Every month, at the new moon, we each take a virgin blood-mare down to the shore and, after fastening her securely, hide in our caves. We have not long to wait, before a sea-horse, attracted by the odour of the female, comes up out of the water and, after looking to left and right to see that no one is by, goes up to the mare and covers her. When he has finished he gets off her back and tries to lead her away with him; when she cannot follow him, he whinnies loudly and strikes her with his head and hoofs; this noise is a signal for us that he has finished covering her, so we rush out and converge toward him, uttering loud cries which drive him back into the sea. The mare becomes pregnant, and, in course of time, drops a foal worth all of a king's treasure. The sea-horse is due today; as soon as his work is over, I will present you to King Mihrajan and show you our country. Blessed be Allah who caused us to meet, for without me you would have perished of grief in this desert place and never have seen your native land again!"

I heartily thanked the groom and was still talking

to him when suddenly the sea-horse came out of the water, threw himself upon the mare, and covered her. When he had finished, he would have taken her away with him, but she could only rear, neighing all round the circle of her picket. My friend leapt from the cave, and calling his companions, led them towards the sea-horse with loud cries and a clashing of swords against shields, so that the frightened beast plunged like a buffalo into the sea and disappeared.

The other grooms crowded round me and greeted me amiably, offering me food and drink and a good horse to ride on. I accepted their invitation and we all set off together towards the king's palace. When we reached the city, my companions went first into the royal presence to announce my arrival and later, when an interview had been granted to me, I was led before King Mihrajan and wished him peace.

He returned my greeting, welcomed me kindly, and asked to hear my story from my own lips. I told him every detail of my adventures so that he marvelled, saying: "My son, as Allah lives you would certainly not have survived such terrible trials if a long life had not been written for you. Praise be to Allah for your deliverance!" He reassured me with further benevolent words, admitted me into the number of his friends, and, as proof of his regard, appointed me inspector of ports and bays and registrar of shipping.

My new duties were not so arduous as to prevent me seeing the king every day; he soon came to prefer me above all his friends and to load me with daily gifts; and I had so much influence over him that eventually every affair of the kingdom passed through my hands, to the general good of the people.

But, amid all these honours and duties, I did not forget my own country or quite lose hope of some day

returning to it. I used to ask each passenger and sailor if he knew in what direction lay the city of Baghdad; but none could answer me or say with truth that they had heard of the place. Therefore the longer I stayed in this foreign land, the sadder I became for my home and the greater grew my surprise that none of the sea-captains could show me a way of return.

While I lived in that isle, I had occasion to hear and see many astonishing things; I will tell you a few of them:

One day, while I was in the presence of King Mihrajan, I was introduced to certain Indians, who willingly answered the questions which I put to them, and informed me that, in their country, which is called India, there are a great number of castes, of which the two most important are Kshatriya and Brahman. The first is composed of well-born and equitable men, who are never guilty of sin or oppression; and the second of pure and holy people who never drink wine and yet are friends of joy, of good manners, of horses, of pageantry, and beauty. The learned Indians also told me that these castes are divided into seventy-two lesser castes, whose traditions are separate in every way. This astonished me a great deal. Also I had occasion to visit a neighboring land belonging to my king, which was called Kabil. This place resounds with the beating of drums and cymbals on every night of the year and yet I found that the inhabitants were of logical mind and given to beautiful thoughts. In those far seas I once saw a fish more than a hundred cubits long and observed other lesser fish with the heads of owls. Many and strange were the prodigies which I saw there but it would be wearisome to multiply them in my story. Suffice it to say that I lived

long enough in that island to learn many things and to become very rich by judicious bargaining.

One day, as I was standing by the shore, leaning upon my stick and watching for vessels as my duty was, I saw a great ship enter the bay. I waited till she had cast anchor and lowered her ladder and then, going aboard, interviewed the captain to take an inventory of his cargo. The sailors unloaded her in my presence, while I listed the various merchandise and, when their work was over, I asked the captain if he had anything more aboard. "My master," he answered, "I have still a quantity of merchandise in the hold, but it is in storage, as the owner who came with us was drowned during the voyage. When opportunity serves, I shall sell his property and take the money back to his relations in Baghdad, the City of Peace."

"O captain, what was the name of that merchant?" I cried with a fast-beating heart. "Sindbad the Sailor," he answered. I looked more closely at the man and saw that he was indeed the captain who had had to abandon us upon the whale. "I am Sindbad the Sailor!" I cried at the top of my voice; and then continued: "When the whale moved under the fires that were lighted on her back I was thrown into the water, but, thanks to a wooden trough which some of the merchants had used for washing their clothes, was able to ride upon the sea and paddle with my feet. After that there happened that which Allah permitted to happen." Straightway I told the captain how I had been saved and through the course of what trials I had risen to the post of marine registrar under King Mihrajan.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

When the captain heard my words, he cried: "There is no power or might save in Allah! In none of his creatures have I ever found honesty or an upright heart. How do you dare, O wily registrar, to pretend to be Sindbad the Sailor, when we all saw him drowned with our own eyes? Are you not ashamed of such an impudent lie?"

"Indeed, good captain," I answered, "lies are the weapon of the deceitful. Listen, for I will give you proofs that I am indeed that drowned Sindbad of whom you speak." Then I reminded him of certain details, known only to myself and him, of that calamity which I have already described to you. At last he could doubt no longer, so he called together the other merchants, and they all congratulated me on my safety, saying: "As Allah lives, we could hardly believe at first that you had not been drowned. Surely He has given you a second life!"

The captain delivered all my merchandise to me and, after examining it to see that nothing was missing and that my name and seal on each bale had not been interfered with, I had it carried to the market and sold the greater part of it at a profit of a hundred for one, reserving only certain rich pieces as a present for King Mihrajan. When the king heard of the ship's arrival he raised his hands in astonishment and, as he loved me much, refused to be outdone in generosity by me, making me presents of great price. I hastened to sell these for a considerable fortune in money which I caused to be carried on board the very ship in which I had first set out.

When all my preparations were made, I thanked the king for his protection and great generosity. He gave me leave to depart in many sad and touching words and made me further costly presents, which I did not sell and which you can see about you in this hall, O honourable guests. As a final cargo I sent aboard a great supply of those perfumes which you can smell even at this moment, aloe-wood, camphor, incense, and sandal, in which that far isle abounded.

We set sail and Allah sent us favourable breezes so that after many nights and days we arrived in sight of Bassora and, without delaying long at that port, continued up stream and joyfully cast anchor at Baghdad, the City of Peace, the place of my birth.

I soon came, loaded with riches and ready with great presents, to my own house in my own street, and found the folk of my family in excellent health. I hastened to buy many slaves of both sexes, mamelukes, beautiful veiled women, negroes, lands, houses, and other property, more in number than I had inherited on the death of my father.

In this new life I forgot the sorrows, hardships, and dangers which I had undergone, the sadness of exile and the fatigues of voyaging. I made charming friends and lived a life of calm joy for many months, feasting my mind with pleasure, eating delicately, and drinking rare wines.

Such was the first of my voyages.

Tomorrow, if Allah wills, I will give you all an account of the second of my seven voyages; I can assure you that it is much more extraordinary than the first.

Sindbad the Sailor asked Sindbad the Porter to dine with him and at last sent him away with a hun-

dred pieces of gold, begging him to return on the morrow, saying: "I shall look forward with delight to further acquaintance with your urbanity and charming manners." "Be it upon my head and before my eye!" answered the porter, "I beg respectfully to accept. I pray that joy may be everlasting in your house, my master!"

With that he returned home, marvelling and rejoicing; and dreamed all night of what he had heard and experienced in the house of Sindbad the Sailor.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

In the morning the porter returned to the house of Sindbad the Sailor, who received him affably, saying: "May you find friendship easy in this house and be altogether at home with me." The porter wished to kiss his host's hand and, when Sindbad the Sailor would not permit this, cried: "May Allah whiten your days and establish His blessing about you for ever!" When the other guests arrived all sat down about a loaded cloth, rich with roast lambs and golden with fowls which lay among bowls of delicious stuffing and pistachio paste and were flanked by abundance of nuts and grapes. They ate and drank and bathed their spirits in the melody of skilful lute-players.

When the feasting was over the guests fell silent and Sindbad spoke to them of:

THE SECOND VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

I WAS LIVING a life of unexpected pleasure when, one day, the old desire entered my head to visit far countries and strange people; to voyage among the isles and curiously regard things hitherto unknown to me; also the trading habit rose in me again. I went to the market and spent a great deal of money on suitable merchandise which I had solidly packed and taken to the quay, where I soon found a fair new ship, equipped with excellent sails, having every sort of marine mechanism aboard and a stout crew of excellent sailors. I fell in love with this vessel and caused all my goods to be taken aboard and placed with those of other merchants who were known to me and with whom I was very pleased to journey.

We set sail the same day and made excellent time across the sea, visiting from island to island and ocean to ocean for many weeks, making ourselves known to the notables and chief merchants at each port of call and both selling and exchanging our goods to great advantage. Fate willed that we should touch at an island of great natural beauty, covered with tall trees, rich in fruits and flowers, filled with the singing of birds, watered by cool streams, but utterly uninhabited.

The captain willingly fell in with our wish to spend a few hours in this place, so we cast anchor and, going on shore, began to walk up and down, breathing the good air of the shady and bird-haunted meadows. Taking a little food with me, I went and sat down by the side of a clear stream, shadowed from the sun by thick leafage, and took great pleasure in eating and drinking in such surroundings. A small breeze whis-

pered an invitation to perfect rest, so I lay upon the grass and let sleep and the cool and scented air overcome my eyelids.

When I woke I saw none of my fellow-travellers and soon discovered that the ship had left without anyone noticing my absence. I looked to right and left, before and behind, and could see no moving thing save the white sail dipping far out to sea.

So great was my grief and stupefaction that I felt my bile duct on the point of bursting. What would become of me on this desert island, seeing that all I possessed was being swiftly carried away from me by the ship? A prey to desolate thoughts, I cried aloud: "All is lost, O Sindbad the Sailor! If a kind destiny saved you on your first voyage, you cannot expect her to do the same again. The cup which falls a second time is sure to break."

I wept and groaned, I uttered great cries to break the despair which seemed to be closing round my heart. I beat my head with my hand, crying: "O miserable fool, why did you so rashly tempt the sea again, when you were living in all delight at Baghdad? Was not your meat, your drink, your clothing all that could be desired? Was there any happiness which you lacked? Was it as if your first voyage had been unsuccessful? . . . We belong to Allah and all return to Him at last." With that, I threw myself upon the earth and all but went mad.

At length, realising that my regrets were useless and my repentance a thought too late, I rose to my feet and, after wandering aimlessly for some time, climbed to the top of a tree to avoid any deadly meeting with wild beasts or unknown enemy. From that perch I looked long to left and right, but could see nothing save the sky, the earth, the sea, the birds, the sands,

and the rocks. Happening, however, to look in a different direction, I noticed on the far horizon the appearance of something white and enormous. I climbed down from my tree; but, being a little frightened, it was only slowly and very carefully that I made my way towards the strange thing which I had noticed. At length I drew near enough to see that it was a gigantic dome of shining white, with a broad base and yet taller than it was broad. I walked all round it but could find no door of any sort; then I tried to climb up the side of it, but it was so polished and slippery that I could make no progress. At last I had to content myself with measuring the thing and, taking a mark by my footsteps in the sand, walked round it again and found that it had a diameter of exactly a hundred and fifty paces.

While I was racking my brains to think of some way by which I could enter this dome, I suddenly saw the sun disappear and the day about me change to night. At first I thought a great cloud had passed before the sun, although such a thing would have been impossible in midsummer; therefore I lifted my head to examine so unseasonable a portent and observed an enormous bird, with formidable wings, flying in the eye of the sun.

I could not believe my eyes until I recalled that travellers and sailors had told me in my youth that there existed, in a far island, a bird of terrifying size called the Roc; a bird which could lift an elephant. I concluded then that this must be a Roc and that the white dome, at whose foot I found myself, was none other than one of its eggs. I was soon proved right in my supposition, for the bird came to earth over the egg, covering it completely, stretching its great wings on either side and letting its two feet touch the earth

to left and right. In this attitude it went to sleep. (Blessed be He who sleeps not throughout eternity!)

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

I had been lying flat on my belly upon the earth and now found myself below one of the bird's feet which, seen thus close, seemed larger than the trunk of an old tree. Rising swiftly, I undid the stuff of my turban and, after having doubled it and twisted it into a strong rope, tied it in a firm knot about my waist and about one of the toes of the Roc. For I thought to myself: "This monstrous bird will sometime fly away and, when he does so, I will be carried into some place where I can see others of my kind again. Wherever I am set down will be better than a desert island."

In spite of my movements, the bird took no more notice of me than if I had been a trivial fly or modest crawling ant.

I remained as I was all night, not daring to close my eyes lest the bird should fly away with me while I was asleep; but it was not till morning that it stepped from the egg, uttered a terrible cry, and soared into the air. It rose and rose until I thought that I was about to touch the vault of Heaven, then suddenly dropped so swiftly that I could not feel my own weight, and came to earth with me. It lighted upon a jut of rock and at once, with trembling fingers, I untied my turban, fearing that the bird might rise with

me again before I could free myself. As soon as I was clear of the claw, I shook myself and arranged my garments; I was hurrying to place myself out of reach of my unconscious liberator, when it took the air again, this time carrying in its talons a vast black thing, a very great serpent of detestable appearance. Soon it disappeared in the direction of the sea.

I looked round this new region to which I had come and was fixed to the spot on which I stood with fear, for I found myself in a wide and deep valley shut in on all sides by mountains so high that, when I looked at their tops, my turban fell off behind. They were so precipitous that to climb them would have been impossible and I saw that nothing was to be gained by making the attempt.

My despair was complete and I cried: "Oh, how much better it would have been to stay in that deserted island than to come to this barren place where there is neither food nor water; there at least I had the advantage of fruit trees and delightful streams, but here are nothing but unfriendly rocks among which I shall die of hunger and thirst. There is no power or might save in Allah! I escape from one evil, to fall into a greater and more certain!"

I walked about to take stock of the valley and found that its rocks were all of diamond. The earth about me was littered with diamonds, great and small, which had fallen from the mountains and, in some places, made heaps as high as a man's head.

I was just beginning to take an interest in these stones when I saw a sight more fearful than all the horrors I had already experienced. The guardians of the diamond rocks were moving about their treasure; innumerable black snakes, thicker and longer than palm-trees, each one of which could have swallowed

a large elephant. They were beginning to go back into their dens, for by day they hid themselves from their enemy the Roc and only moved about at night.

With infinite precautions I began to move away from the place where they seemed thickest, examining every inch of ground before I set my foot on it, and saying to myself: "This is what you get for abusing the patience of Destiny, O Sindbad, O man with empty and insatiable eyes!" In a state of pitiable fear I continued to move up and down the valley, resting from time to time in the most sheltered places I could find, until the fall of night.

I had forgotten all about food and drink and had no other thought than to save my life from the serpents; at last I found a narrow-mouthed cave near the place where I had been set down by the Roc. I crawled through the entrance and then rolled a stone against it on the inside. I crawled forward, with my fear somewhat abated, looking for a comfortable place to sleep, and thinking: "Tomorrow at dawn I will go out and see what Destiny has in store for me."

I was about to lie down when I noticed what I had taken for a large black rock in the middle of the cave was a terrible snake, rolled about her eggs; my skin shrivelled like a dead leaf with fear and I fell senseless to the ground, where I remained until morning.

Coming to myself and finding that I had not been devoured in the night, I found strength to roll away the stone and totter like a drunken man into the open air; I was so worn out with lack of sleep and food that my legs could hardly bear me up. I was looking about me when suddenly I saw a great joint of meat flatten itself with a noisy slap upon the rocks beside me; I started and lifted my eyes to see who bombarded me in this fashion, but could perceive no one. Then a

memory flashed across my mind of something I had heard from merchant-adventurers and explorers who had visited the diamond mountains. It seemed that men, who wished to take diamonds from this inaccessible valley, had the curious practice of cutting sheep into quarters and throwing them from the top of the mountain, so that the diamonds on which they fell pierced them and became fixed in them. Soon Rocs and mighty eagles would swoop upon this provision and carry it from the valley in their claws to their nests in the high hills. Then the jewellers would throw themselves upon the birds, with great cries and beating of their arms, so that they were obliged to let fall their prize and fly away. After that the men had only to explore the quarters of meat and pick out the diamonds.

With this memory, a plan came to me which might just succeed in saving me from the living tomb of the valley. First I selected a great quantity of diamonds, choosing always the largest and most valuable, and hid them about me everywhere. I filled my pockets with them, let them fall down between my robe and my shirt, stuffed my turban and my drawers with them, and pressed them into the lining of my garments.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

After that I unrolled the stuff of my turban as I had done before and, lying down below the quarter

of mutton, bound it solidly to my chest. I had not lain long in this position when I felt myself lifted like a feather by the formidable talons of a Roc which were fastened in the meat. In the twinkling of an eye I was out of the valley and in the nest which my captor had built high in the mountains. Here the bird began to rip up the meat and my own flesh in order to feed her young with it. Happily for me a great clamour arose almost at once and the bird flew away, so that I was able to unfasten myself and stand upright with my face and clothes all bloody.

I saw a merchant hurrying to the spot whose face fell and became afraid as he saw me; however, when I did not move or make any hostile demonstration, he hurriedly bent over the meat and examined it, without finding any diamonds. Then he lifted his arms to the sky, crying: "O loss, O disillusion! There is no power save in Allah! I take refuge in Allah against the Evil One!" With that he clapped his hands together in an ecstasy of despair.

I wished him peace; but, instead of returning my greeting, he gave me a furious glance and said: "Who are you? And by what right have you come here to steal my goods?" "Do not be afraid, worthy merchant," I answered, "I am not a thief, and I have not touched your goods. Also I am a human being and not an evil Jinni as you appear to believe; I may even claim to be a very honest man, a merchant by profession, a man of strange adventures. As for my being here, it is a wonderful tale which I have to tell you. But first I wish to prove my benevolence towards you by asking you to accept some of these diamonds, which I myself picked up in that valley which no human has ever visited before."

I took some excellent stones from my belt, and gave

them to the man, saying: "Here is such profit as you have never dared to hope for in all your life." Then the owner of the quarter of mutton was filled with joy and loaded me with a thousand effusive thanks, saying: "A blessing be upon you, O my master. A single one of these diamonds would be enough to make me rich until extreme old age, for never in my life have I seen the like even at the courts of kings." After further thanks he called to other merchants, who were among the near-by peaks, and they crowded round me, wishing me peace and welcome. I told them the whole of my strange adventures from beginning to end, but it would be useless to repeat it here.

When the good merchants had a little recovered from their surprise, they congratulated me upon my safety, saying: "As Allah lives, your destiny has drawn you alive out of an abyss from which no one before you has escaped." Then, seeing that I was dropping from hunger, thirst, and weariness, they gave me a plenitude of food and drink and, leading me to the tent which they occupied, watched over my sleep for a day and a night. On the second morning they led me down to the sea shore and I rejoiced as we went with exceeding joy over my two remarkable escapes. After a short voyage we came to a pleasant island covered with trees so great and shady that a hundred men could have escaped from the sun beneath one of them. From these trees is extracted that white substance of warm and agreeable odour which is called camphor. The tops of the trees are pierced and the sap, which is, as it were, the honey of the tree, falls, drop by drop, like gum, into vessels which are placed underneath to catch it.

In that island I also saw a terrible animal, which goes by the name of *karkaddan* or rhinoceros. It

pastures upon the meadows as a cow or buffalo; but is taller than a camel and carries a horn ten cubits long upon its snout. Upon this horn is engraved a human figure and it is so strong that with it the *karkaddan* fights and conquers the elephant, and at last spits and lifts it from the earth until it is dead. But the fat of the elephant runs down into the eyes of the *karkaddan,* blinding it and causing it to fall down where it stands; then the terrible Roc swoops down upon both animals from the high air and carries them to its nest to feed its young. Also I saw many different kinds of buffaloes in that island.

We stayed there for some time, rejoicing in the excellent air, so that I had time to exchange some of my diamonds for a treasure of gold and silver too large to be contained in the hold of a single ship. At length we departed and, voyaging from island to island and from country to country and from city to city, at each of which we admired the beautiful works of God and made advantageous sales and exchanges, came at last to Bassora in the blessed land, and thence up the river to Baghdad, the home of peace. I hastened to my own house in my own street, loaded with riches, much golden money, and the finest of my diamonds; and, after being greeted rapturously by my friends and the folk of my family, distributed wealth to all, without forgetting the least of my acquaintances.

From that time forth I used life joyously, eating prime meats, drinking delicately, lying soft and dressing rich, and not denying myself the constant society of pleasant persons.

Every day important people came to hear me speak of my adventures and to learn how things went in far-off lands; and I rejoiced to entertain and teach

them in the way they wished. They would never leave without first congratulating me on my escape from such terrible dangers and expressing gratifying surprise at all I told them. Such was my second voyage.

But tomorrow, my friends, if Allah wills, I will tell you the strange circumstances of my third periplus and you will find them far more interesting and breathless than those of my first two.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

Sindbad the Sailor fell silent and slaves hastened to set food and drink before his astonished guests. Finally Sindbad the Sailor gave a hundred gold pieces to Sindbad the Landsman, who took them with polite thanks and many blessings and came to his own house, his head turning with all the wonders which he had heard. In the morning the porter rose and, after making his prayer, returned, as he had been invited to do, to the house of the rich traveller. There he was welcomed cordially and bidden to take part in the daily feast and entertainment, which lasted till nightfall. Then, when the guests fell silent and attentive, Sindbad the Sailor told them of:

THE THIRD VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

You must know, my friends—but Allah has a greater knowledge than any of His creatures—that

the comfortable life which I led after my return speedily made me forget all the dangers I had run and all the misfortunes which I had undergone, so that I began to grow tired of the monotonous laziness of my existence in Baghdad. My soul longed for change and the delights of travel and I was tempted anew by the love of skilful trading. Ambition is the cause of all misfortune, as I was soon to prove in a most terrible fashion. I bought a quantity of rich merchandise and took it from Baghdad to Bassora, where I found a great ship already filled with honest, good-hearted merchants, of the kind who can live contentedly together and render aid when aid is needed. I embarked with them in this vessel and we at once set sail, with the blessing of Allah upon our voyage.

The happiest omens attended our setting forth and, in all the lands at which we touched, we both traded to advantage and learnt many new things, so that nothing was lacking to complete our happiness.

One day, when we were in mid-ocean far from any Mussulman country, we saw our captain, who had been closely examining the horizon, suddenly beat himself about the face, wrench out the hairs of his beard, tear his garments, and throw his turban to the deck.

We surrounded him, as he stood there weeping and lamenting, crying out: "What is it, captain?" "O passengers of peace," he answered, "the contrary wind has beaten us and thrown us from our course into a sinister sea. We are lost, for fate is driving us upon that island which you see before you and no man who ever touched there has returned alive to tell the tale. It is the Isle of Apes; and I feel deep in my soul that we are lost forever."

As the captain was speaking, we saw our ship sur-

rounded by a multitude of beings who were hairy like monkeys but more in number than an army of grasshoppers; while others, staying upon the beach, uttered howls which curdled our blood. We did not dare to attack these besiegers or try to repulse them, for fear they should rush upon us and kill us to a man, by the force of their number; for numbers in the end can overcome the most valorous. We made no movement while the apes climbed aboard and began to lay hands upon our belongings. They were more ugly than the most ugly of ugly things that I have seen in my life, being covered with hairs, having yellow eyes in black faces, and little bodies no more than three spans in height; their grimaces and cries were more terrible than the mind of man could have imagined. It was clear that they spoke to us and cursed us, grinding their jaws the while; but we could not understand their language, although we listened with our hearts in our mouths. As we stood helpless, they climbed up the masts, unfastened the sails, cutting the ropes with their teeth, and at last took possession of the helm. Guided by them and driven by the wind, our vessel soon beached herself; and then the apes took us one by one and carried us to shore. Leaving us there, they climbed on board in a mass and, pushing off, were soon lost to sight in the open sea.

Our only means of transport being gone, we judged it useless to stand upon the sand, gazing upon the ocean, so we walked towards the middle of the island, where we found some fruit-trees and a running stream, which would be sufficient to stave off an apparently certain death for many days.

While we were eating, we saw far off among the trees, a great building which seemed to have been deserted by man.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Two-hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

We walked towards this building and found that it was a tall square palace, surrounded by solid walls in which a double door of ebony stood open. As no door-keeper stood there, we entered and found ourselves in a hall as large as most courtyards, furnished only with kitchen utensils of unusual size and great iron spits. The floor was heaped with mounds of bones, some of which were already white and others still fresh and juicy. A foul odour sickened our nostrils, but as we were worn out with weariness and fear, we threw ourselves down and slept.

The sun had hardly set when a noise like thunder woke us and we saw the figure of an enormous black man stepping down through the ceiling. He was taller than any palm-tree and uglier than all the apes put together. His eyes were red like two flaming ovens, his front teeth were long and curling like a boar's tusks, his mouth was as big as the mouth of a well, his lips lolled upon his breast, his ears fell over his shoulders like those of an elephant, and the ends of his fingers were taloned with lion's claws.

First we were convulsed with terror and then stayed very still, as the giant sat down on a bench beside the wall and examined us silently one by one. Finally he came up to us and, choosing me from among the others, seized me by the skin of my neck as if I had been a small parcel of cloth, and turned me this way

and that, feeling me as a butcher feels a sheep's head. He apparently found me not to his liking, as I was sweaty with terror and yet little more than skin and bone because of the fatigues of my voyage. He threw me to the ground and treated my neighbour in the same way, only to put him aside and take up another. All of us were examined in this way and at last it came the captain's turn.

Now the captain was a fat and fleshy man, as well as being the tallest and strongest person aboard; therefore the giant preferred him to all others and, taking him between his fingers as a slaughterman takes a lamb, broke his neck beneath his foot, spitted him on one of the great spits from mouth to anus, and lighting a great wood fire in the oven, turned him before it slowly until he was cooked to a nicety. After this the ogre pulled him to pieces with his finger-nails as if he had been a chicken and swallowed him in a few mouthfuls. Then he sucked and cracked the bones, throwing them to the floor as they were finished.

As soon as his meal was over, the giant stretched himself along the bench to digest it and was soon snoring like a buffalo. He slept thus till morning and then went away as he had come, leaving us half-dead with fear.

When we were certain that he had really gone, we came out of the terrified silence, which we had maintained all night, and began sobbing and lamenting to each other over our evil plight.

"It would have been better," we cried, "had we been drowned in the sea or eaten by the apes, than roasted upon a spit. As Allah lives, that is a filthy kind of death! But what can we do? Allah's will must run its course; there is no power save in Allah!"

We left the building and wandered all day about the island, searching for some cave or hiding place; but we found none, because the island was quite flat and bare. When evening fell it seemed to us the lesser of two evils to return to the palace.

We had not been there long when the black man announced his coming by a noise as of thunder; in the same way as the night before, he chose out one of the merchants whom he spitted, roasted, and ate; then he again snored like a gorged animal until the morning. At dawn he went forth again, grumbling horribly to himself and taking no notice of us at all.

By this time we had well thought over our deadly situation, so that, as soon as we were alone, we cried out: "Let us drown ourselves in the sea rather than be cooked and eaten!" We were about to put this desperate plan into execution when one of us rose, saying: "Listen to me, comrades. Would it not be better for us to kill this black man than to kill ourselves?" Then I rose in my turn and said to my friends: "If we determine to kill this giant, we must begin by constructing a raft out of the wood which litters the seashore, so that we can escape from this cursed island when we have rid creation of our Mussulman-eating barbarian. We can make our way to some other island and there wait for a ship which will take us back to our own country. Even if the raft capsizes and we are drowned, we will have escaped roasting and avoided the unlawful act of suicide. Our death will be a martyrdom and count as such upon the Judgment Day."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundredth Night
Had Come

She said:

"As Allah lives," cried all the other merchants, "that is an excellent plan!"

We went down to the beach and, after making our raft, loaded it with fruits and edible herbs by way of food; then we returned to the palace and waited fearfully for the coming of the black ogre.

He came with his customary thunder-clap, baying like a great mad dog, and we had to submit to the loss of the plumpest of our companions before we could put our purpose into execution. At last, when the monster was asleep and snoring like an earthquake, we took two of the iron spits and, making them red hot in the fire, laid hold of them by the cool ends and staggered with them, many to each one, towards the sleeper. With all our strength we plunged these terrible weapons into the frightful eyes of the black man and weighed upon them with our bodies until there was no doubt as to his blindness.

His pain must have been atrocious, for he gave vent to a fearful cry, which cast us all many yards away on to the floor. He bounded from the bench and lumbered about blindly with outstretched hands, yelling and attempting to find us; but we were easily able to dodge him, so that his gropings met no more than the empty air; and he soon felt his way to the door and disappeared with moans of suffering.

Feeling certain that the ogre would die of his wounds, we made our way light-heartedly towards the beach, and, after perfecting our raft, pushed it off from the shore and rowed out to sea. We were only

© DINGWALL-ROCK, LD.

"The Third Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor"

a few yards from the shingle when we saw the blind giant running towards us, guided by a woman of his own species, in every way more disgusting than himself. When they came to the beach, they stood howling at us for a little while; and then, seizing upon vast lumps of rock, bombarded the raft with them. Some of the hits told, so that all my companions save two were drowned; but we three who survived soon managed to paddle our craft beyond the range of these great missiles.

As soon as we reached the open sea the wind took us and, carrying us for two days and nights, threw us upon another island, just in time to save ourselves from death with fruit and water, and then to climb up into a tall tree before the fall of night.

The first thing which we saw when we opened our eyes in the morning was a vile snake, as large as the tree in which we were hiding, which darted towards us with burning eyes, opening jaws as great as an oven. Suddenly the beast rose up, so that his head was on a level with the tree top, and, seizing one of my companions in his teeth, swallowed him with one movement to the shoulders and, with a second, made him disappear entirely. We heard the bones of the unfortunate man cracking in the snake's belly and thought to ourselves: "As Allah lives, each new death which we come across seems more detestable than the others. Our joy at escaping the black man's spit needs must change to the fear of something worse! There is no help save in Allah!"

Although half unconscious with fear, we were able to climb down from the tree to eat some fruit and satisfy our thirst at a near-by stream. Afterwards we went all over the island, hunting for some more secure shelter than that of the night before, and at last found

a tree so high that its upper branches appeared to be out of reach of any serpent in the world. At nightfall we climbed into the top of this and made ourselves as comfortable as we could, drawing quiet breath for the first time in many days. All at once, however, we heard a monstrous hissing and a noise of breaking branches. Before we could make a movement, the snake had seized my companion, who was sitting a little lower than I, and engulfed the first three-quarters of him with one single swallow. It was my lot to see the huge creature wrap itself around the tree and crack all the bones of my last comrade before swallowing him whole.

Though the snake now retired, I stayed in the tree without daring to move until the sun brought me warmth and confidence. My first thought was to cast myself into the sea and thus put an end to a life in which terror accumulated upon the head of terror; but, when I was half-way to the beach, my soul revolted because the spirit of man is a precious thing, and also because I had conceived a plan which I considered would finally protect me against the snake.

Having collected a large quantity of wood, I stretched myself on the ground and fixed a broad plank of it below the soles of my feet. A second and a third I secured to the outside of my thighs, a fourth in front of my belly, and a fifth and largest over my head. Thus I was surrounded on all sides by wooden bulwarks which would prove an obstacle to the snake in whatever direction he attacked me. When I had made my preparations, I stayed where I was, lying upon the ground, and delivered myself into the hands of Destiny.

At nightfall the snake came; as soon as it saw me it threw itself upon me but could not swallow me down

into its belly because of my wooden protections. Therefore it turned round me, jumping up and down, to find an unguarded part, but although it pulled me about and plagued me, it could not eat me. All night I fought, feeling its stinking breath in my face; and at dawn the terrible beast shook itself with fury and disappeared among the trees.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come

She said:

When I was quite sure that the snake had gone, I undid the knots which bound the planks to me and lay on the ground for many hours, suffering so throughout all my limbs that I feared that I would never recover the use of them. At last, however, I found that I could stand and began painfully to cross the island; as soon as I reached the other side and looked out to sea, I saw a ship passing swiftly with all sails set.

At sight of her I waved my arms and cried out like a madman; then I undid the stuff of my turban and, fastening it to the branch of a tree, waved it above my head as a signal of distress. Destiny willed that my despair should not pass unnoticed, the ship turned from her course and made towards the island and, in a very short time, I was rescued by the captain and his crew.

As soon as I was on board, I was given clothes to cover my nakedness and food which I devoured ravenously; but my greatest joy was a certain store of cool

fresh water, from which I was allowed to drink until I was satisfied. Little by little my heart grew calm and I felt rest and well-being fall like balm upon my weary body.

I began to live again, after having looked so long upon the face of death, and thanked Allah for His mercy. Soon I became so like my old self that I looked upon my trials and misfortunes as so many bad dreams.

We made an excellent voyage before a favouring wind and came at last to the island of Salahata, where we cast anchor and the merchants went ashore to trade. As soon as they had left the ship, the captain came up to me saying: "Listen now to what I have to say to you! You are a poor man and a stranger; also, by your own account, you have suffered much; therefore I wish to aid you and help you to return to your own country, so that, when you think of me, it may be with pleasure and prayer." "O captain," I answered, "I will certainly call down blessings upon you with all my heart." "That is well," continued the good man. "Some years ago we had a passenger who was left behind on an island at which we touched. Since then there has been no news of him and we do not know whether he is dead or alive. All his goods are still in the hold and I intend to hand them over to you, that you may sell them and, keeping a commission for yourself, give me the price to carry back to the unfortunate man's family in Baghdad." "Let it be as you say, my master," I answered. "I shall ever feel gratitude to you for enabling me to earn such honest money."

The captain ordered the sailors to take the merchandise from the hold and called the ship's clerk to count and enter it, bale by bale. "To whom do these

goods belong?" asked the man. "In whose name shall I write them down?" "The owner's name was Sindbad the Sailor," answered the captain, "but now you must enter it in the name of this poor passenger. Therefore ask him what that is."

"But I am Sindbad the Sailor!" I cried out in astonishment; then, looking more closely at the captain I recognised him for the man who had forgotten me when I fell asleep on the island at the beginning of my second voyage.

Trembling with emotion, I continued: "O captain, do you not recognise me? I am indeed Sindbad the Sailor, a merchant of Baghdad. Listen to my tale! Do you not remember that it was I who went ashore upon that island many years ago and did not rejoin the ship? I ate beside a delightful stream and fell asleep, only waking to see your vessel far off upon the ocean. Many merchants in the Mountain of Diamonds saw me and will bear witness that I am indeed Sindbad."

I had not finished my explanations when one of the merchants came aboard to make a further selection of his goods, and coming up to me, looked closely in my face. When I paused for breath he clapped his hands together in surprise, saying: "As Allah lives, none of you would believe me when I told you of the strange adventure which happened to me one day on the Mountain of Diamonds, when I saw a man lifted from the valley to the peaks by a Roc, who had pounced upon a quarter of mutton to which the adventurer was attached. Well, this is the man! He is Sindbad the Sailor, that very generous merchant who made me a present of wonderful diamonds." So saying, my old friend embraced me as if I had been a long-lost brother.

Then the captain also looked more closely at me and suddenly recognised me as Sindbad. He took me in his arms as if I had been his son, and congratulated me on being alive, saying: "As Allah lives, my master, your adventure has been a prodigious one; but praise be to Him who has allowed us to meet again and permitted the recovery of all your goods!" With that he had the bales carried for me on to the quay and I sold them at such enormous profit that I more than made up for the time that I had lost since I purchased them.

After this we left the island of Salahata and came to the land of Sind, where all the ship's company bought and sold. In those far seas I saw so many incredible prodigies that a detailed account of them would be impossible. I saw a fish which looked like a cow and another which closely resembled an ass; also a bird which is born from a sea shell, whose little ones live ever upon the surface of the waters and do not fly over the earth.

We sailed on and on until, by the permission of Allah, we came to Bassora and, staying there only a few days, hastened up-stream to Baghdad.

I went to my own house in my own street and, greeting my friends, my old companions, and the folk of my family, gave great alms to the widow and orphan, because I had returned richer from my last adventure than before.

Tomorrow, my friends, if Allah wills, I will tell you the tale of my fourth voyage and you will find it more interesting than the other three.

Then Sindbad the Sailor gave Sindbad the Porter a hundred pieces of gold, as he had done on the days which went before, and invited him to return next morning.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Next day the porter returned and, when the usual feast was finished, heard Sindbad the Sailor tell of:

THE FOURTH VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

The delightful pleasures of my life in Baghdad could not make me forget my voyages; though my memories did not dwell upon the hardships and the dangers which had been my lot. My traitor soul only showed me the advantageous side of travelling in far countries, so that at last I could resist her whisperings no longer and, leaving my house and great possessions, provided myself with a greater quantity of precious merchandise than I had ever carried before and had it conveyed to Bassora. There I embarked upon a great ship in company with some of the best known merchants of the city.

We made excellent time across the seas, trading to great profit from island to island and from land to land, until one day, when we were in mid-ocean, the captain suddenly gave the order to anchor, crying: "We are lost beyond all hope!" A great wind raised all the sea about us and, hurling heavy seas against the ship, broke it to pieces and washed all who were aboard into the gulfs of the water.

Thanks to Allah, I found a plank in the depths and, clinging to it with hands and feet, tossed hither and

thither for half a day with certain other of the merchants who had managed to reach it also. Rowing with our hands and feet and helped by wind and current, we were thrown, more dead than alive with cold and terror, upon the beach of an island.

We lay as we were upon the sand all night, but in the morning we were able to rise and make our way into the interior, where we saw a building among the trees.

As we drew nearer, a crowd of naked black men streamed from the door of this building; without saying a word they surrounded us and led us into a mighty hall where a king was sitting upon a high throne.

This monarch bade us be seated and then had trays brought covered with such meats as we had never seen in our lives before. Their appearance did not excite my appetite but my companions ate greedily because of the hunger which we had suffered since our shipwreck. Though I did not know it at the time, my abstention saved my life.

After the first few mouthfuls, the other merchants were seized with such a fit of gluttony that they went on swallowing and swallowing for many hours all that was put before them, with mad gestures and strange snuffling sounds. While they still continued to guzzle, the naked men fetched a vase filled with a kind of ointment with which they anointed the bodies of all the guests who were feeding heartily. The effect upon the bellies of my friends was extraordinary; I saw them, little by little, grow larger in all directions, until the stomach of each was swollen to the size of a great water-skin. Their appetites increased in proportion, so that they went on eating and I was aghast to see that they were never filled.

The sight was so terrifying that I would touch nothing and refused to be anointed; this sobriety on my part was a lucky thing, for I soon discovered that these naked men were eaters of human flesh and used these strange ways of fattening those who fell into their hands and making their flesh more tender and juicy. The king was an ogre who ate every day a roasted stranger prepared by the method which I have described, but the naked men preferred their abominable diet raw, just as it was, without cooking or seasoning of any kind.

At this terrible discovery my fear for myself and my friends knew no bounds, especially when I noticed that the more their bellies swelled the less their intelligence became, until they ate themselves at last into a state of mere brutishness and, when they had become in no way different from slaughter cattle, were put in charge of a herdsman, who took them out every day to feed upon the meadows.

I myself was worn to a shadow with hunger and fear, and the flesh became dry upon my bones, so that the natives took no notice of me and forgot all about me, realising that I was unworthy to be roasted or even grilled for their king.

As the black islanders did not watch me, I was able one day to leave the building in which they lived and make off across the island. As I went I met the herdsman in charge of my unfortunate friends and hastened to hide myself in the tall grass, dodging from tuft to tuft until I had passed them, in order not to be tortured by a sight of their distressing condition.

I walked straight ahead all night, fear of these cannibals having driven away all desire for sleep; and, with only such time as was necessary to take an occa-

sional meal of herbs, I journeyed on towards the unknown for six whole days and nights.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come

She said:

On the morning of the eighth day I came to the opposite side of the island and saw men like myself, white and clothed, gathering pepper from the trees which covered that spot. When they saw me they gathered round me, speaking my own language which I had not heard for so long. In answer to their questions, I told them that I was a poor stranger and related the story of my misfortunes. They were exceedingly astonished by what they heard and, after congratulating me on my escape, offered me food and drink, let me sleep for an hour, and then took me down with them into their ship that they might carry me over and present me to their king, who lived in a neighbouring island.

I found the capital, when we came to it, largely populated, abounding in the excellent things of life, rich in markets, and good shops, transpierced by beautiful roads, where a multitude of horsemen galloped up and down, with neither saddle nor spurs, upon horses of a wonderful breed. When I was presented to the king, I did not omit, after respectful greetings, to tell him of my astonishment on seeing men riding bare-backed. "O my master and lord," I said, "why do people not use saddles here? They are excellent things and

make a man much more the master of his horse."

The king was astonished and asked me: "What thing is this saddle? We have never seen one in all our life." I answered: "Will you allow me to make you one, that you may find out how comfortable and useful a thing it is?"

The king accepted my offer, so I found out a clever carpenter and made him prepare, under my own eyes, a wooden saddle according to my specifications. As soon as it was finished, I provided the wooden basis with a padding of linen and leather, ornamenting it all about with gold embroidery and tassels of different colours. Then I taught a certain blacksmith how to make a bit and a pair of spurs and, because I did not leave him for a moment, he performed his task admirably.

When all was perfect, I chose out the handsomest horse from the king's stables, saddled and bridled it, and equipped it splendidly with such ornaments as long skirts, tassels of silk and gold, and blue tufts about the collar. Then I led it to the presence of the king, who had been impatiently waiting the result of my labours for several days.

The king mounted at once and felt himself so satisfied with the easy mastery which he now had over his horse, that he gave me sumptuous presents and large sums of money.

No sooner had the grand-wazir seen my saddle and realised what an improvement it was upon the old way of riding, than he begged me to make him one like it. I hastened to oblige him; and then all the notables and high dignitaries of the kingdom asked and received saddles in their turn, rewarding me with such presents that I soon became the richest and most respected man in the city.

I was soon a fast friend of the king and one day, while I was with him, he turned to me, saying: "You know that I love you, Sindbad; you have become like one of my own people in my palace, so that I cannot do without you or tolerate the idea that you will some day leave us; therefore I wish to ask you a favour which I hope you will not refuse." "You have but to order, O king," I answered, "your power over me is made strong by gratitude for all the benefits I have received since my arrival in your pleasant kingdom." "Then," continued the king, "I wish you to marry a very beautiful woman of the court. She is both rich and talented, and I trust she will be able to persuade you to stay in our city and our palace until the end of your days. Do not refuse me this, O Sindbad."

I lowered my eyes in confusion and did not know what to answer. "Why do you not speak, my child?" asked the king; and then I stammered out: "O prince of time, the matter is in your hands; I am your slave." At once he sent for the kadi and witnesses, and married me in that same hour to a noble woman of distinguished family. She was extremely rich, owning goods, buildings, and lands, beside her own considerable beauty. The king also gave me a furnished palace with servants, with men slaves and women slaves, and a following which was truly royal.

I lived in the calmness of supreme joy for many months after my marriage and ever nourished the secret hope of escaping from that city and returning to Baghdad with my wife; for we loved each other and the accord between us was marvellous. But when Destiny proposes a thing no human power can turn that thing aside. Also what man may know the future? Alas, I was soon to learn yet again that all our projects are but child's play in the eyes of Fate.

One day my neighbour's wife died, for Allah had willed it so; and, as he was my friend, I went to him and tried to console him, saying: "Do not grieve more than is lawful, O my neighbour; Allah will soon make up to you for your loss by giving you an even better wife. May He prolong your days, my friend!" The man seemed stupefied by my words; he raised his head, saying: "How can you wish me a long life, when you know that I have but an hour to live?" Astounded in my turn, I said: "Why do you speak in that way? What gloomy presentiments are these? Thanks be to Allah, you are in perfect health and nothing threatens you; surely you do not mean that you are going to kill yourself?" He answered: "Ah, now I see that you do not know the customs of our country. It is a rule here that every husband must be buried alive with his dead wife and every wife buried alive with her dead husband. The law is inviolable; and in an hour's time I shall be committed to the earth with the body of my wife. Every man, and even the king, must conform to this custom of our ancestors."

At these words I cried: "As Allah lives, the custom is detestable; I never could find it in my heart to abide by it."

While we were speaking, the friends and relations of my neighbour came in and began to console him as best they might for his own and his wife's death. Then the funeral went forward; the woman's body was placed in an open coffin, dressed in her most beautiful garments and wearing the chief of her jewels; a procession was formed with the husband at the head, walking behind the coffin; and we all proceeded with slow steps towards the place of burial.

We came outside the city to a mountain overlooking

the sea; in a certain part of it I saw a kind of immense well, the stone cover of which was speedily lifted. First the coffin was let down and then my friend was seized and, without offering any resistance, allowed himself to be lowered into the well by a long rope to which was also attached a large jar of water and seven loaves. Then the stone cover was replaced upon the well and we all returned whence we had come.

I had assisted at this ceremony, sick with fear and thinking: "This is more terrible than anything I have yet seen." No sooner did I reach the palace, than I ran to the king, saying: "My master, I have travelled through many lands, but I have never heard of so barbarous an institution as your custom of burying a husband alive with his dead wife. I should like to know, O king of time, if a stranger is equally amenable to this law." "Certainly he is," answered the king, "he must be buried alive with his wife."

At this answer I felt as if my gall-bladder would break against my liver; half mad with terror, I ran to my own house, fearing lest my wife might have died in my absence. When I found her in the best of health, I tried to console myself, saying: "Do not be afraid, O Sindbad; you are certain to be the first to die, therefore you will never be buried alive." But this consolation was vain; for in a short while my wife fell ill and, after lying upon her bed for certain days, rendered her soul to Allah in spite of all the cares with which I surrounded her.

My grief and horror knew no bounds, for I considered it as bad to be buried alive as to be eaten by cannibals. I could have no doubt about my fate when the king came to visit me and condoled with me over my approaching end. He was so fond of me that he insisted on being present with all his court at my

burial, and himself walked beside me when I headed the procession behind the coffin in which my dead wife lay, covered with jewels and ornaments.

When we came to the mountain which overlooked the sea, the well was opened and the body of my wife let down; then all who had come with me clustered round to say farewell. I tried to move the heart of the king by weeping and crying: "I am a stranger and it is not just that I should have to suffer by your law. I have a living wife in my own country and children who have need of me."

The people took no notice of my sobs and lamentations but fixed ropes under my arms and, tying a jar of water and the seven customary loaves to my back, lowered me into the well. When I had reached the bottom of it, they cried down to me: "Unfasten yourself, that we may pull up the ropes!" This I was unwilling to do, but rather kept on pulling upon the cord as a sign that they should haul me up again. Therefore they let go of the ropes, reclosed the mouth of the well with the great stone and went their way, followed by my pitiable cries.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

At once the stench of this fearful underground place made me stop my nose, but it did not prevent me from using the light which filtered from above to inspect this mortuary cave, which I found to be filled

with old and new bodies. It was very high and stretched further than my eye could reach. I fell to the earth weeping and crying: "You deserve this fate, O Sindbad of the unfilled soul! What need was there for you to marry in this city? Why did you not die in the valley of diamonds? Why did you not perish at the teeth of the cannibals? Would that it had pleased Allah to drown you in one of your shipwrecks rather than reserve you for so terrible a death!" I beat myself in the face and the stomach with my fists; but at last, feeling the effects of both hunger and thirst and being determined not to die out of hand, unfastened the loaves and the water from the rope and ate and drank sparingly.

I lived in this way for several days, growing gradually used to the foul odour of the cave and sleeping at night upon a space of earth which I had taken care to clear of bones. The time came when I had neither bread nor water; I had just recited the act of faith in absolute despair and shut my eyes before the approach of death, when the cover was removed above my head and a dead man was let down in his coffin, accompanied by his wife with seven loaves and a jar of water.

I waited until the men above had covered the opening again and then noiselessly possessing myself of a great bone from one of the dead, threw myself upon the woman and brought my weapon down upon her head; I gave her a second and a third blow to make sure that she was dead and then took the seven loaves and the water jar, which kept me alive for several further days.

At the end of that time the covering was again removed and a dead woman was let down with her husband. Life is dear, so I killed the man and took his bread and water. In this way I lived for a long

time, killing each new person who was buried and stealing their provisions.

One day, as I was sleeping in my ordinary place, I was aroused by an unaccustomed noise as of living breath and hurrying feet. I rose and, taking my bone, followed the noise until I could just distinguish some heavily breathing object fleeing away from me. I followed this escaping shadow for a long time, running behind it in the dark, stumbling over the bones of the dead, until suddenly I saw in front of me something like a luminous star which shone and faded out by turns. As I went on towards it, this light grew larger; but I dared not believe that it portended any way of escape, but thought rather that it was a second shaft by which the dead and living were let down. All at once, however, the form in front of me, which I could now see to belong to some animal, bounded through the light and disappeared; then, to my great joy, I realised that I had come upon a hole burrowed by savage beasts, attracted by the bodies in the cave. I followed where the animal had gone before and soon found myself in the open air, beneath the sky of heaven.

I fell upon my knees and thanked the Highest with all my heart for my salvation and, by my prayers, brought peace to my soul. Then I looked about me and saw that I was at the foot of a mountain beside the sea and that this mountain was so steep and jagged that there could be no communication between the place I was in and the city. Not wishing to die of hunger, I returned to the cave and brought out food and water, which I ate and drank in the sunlight with better appetite than I had ever used in the charnel cavern.

I went on living in this way, returning every day to

the cave for food and water, which I obtained by dashing out the brains of those who were buried alive. Also the idea came to me of collecting from the dead all their jewellery, diamonds, bracelets, collars, pearls, rubies, engraved metals, rich garments, and ornaments of gold and silver. These things I hoarded on the seashore in the hope that some day I might be able to escape with them; and, that all should be ready, made them up into strong bundles with the garments of the men and women in the cavern.

I was sitting one day, lost in dreams of my adventures and my present state, when I saw a ship passing near in; I rose hastily, and undoing the stuff of my turban, made vigorous signs with it, as I ran up and down the sand. Thanks be to Allah, the men in the ship saw my signal and sent ashore a boat which took me and all my packages aboard.

When I came on deck, the captain approached me, saying: "Who are you, and how did you come upon that mountain on which, during all the years that I have sailed these seas, I have never seen anything but savage beasts and birds of prey?" "O master," I answered, "I am a poor merchant, stranger to these lands. The great ship in which I voyaged was lost with all her company except myself, who by courage and endurance succeeded in reaching this coast, with all my merchandise, on a large plank which I gripped as the boat went down. As you see, Allah saved me from dying of hunger and thirst." This I said to the captain, being very careful not to tell him of my marriage and burial, lest there should be some aboard who belonged to that barbarous city.

When I had finished explaining myself to the captain, I took a rich jewel from one of my bales and offered it to him, that he might be propitious to me

during the voyage. To my great surprise, however, he showed a most rare disinterestedness and refused my payment, saying kindly: "It is not my custom to asked for payment when I do a good deed. You are not the first whom I have taken up alive out of the sea; I have served many a wrecked mariner and carried him to his own country, for Allah's sake, giving him food, water, and clothes, and also a little something for the expenses of his further journey. For Allah's sake men should behave to men as men."

I thanked the captain and wished him a long life; after which he set all sail and proceeded with his voyage.

We had fair weather from island to island and from sea to sea, so that I could lie pleasantly for hours together recalling my adventures and asking myself whether all my dangers and escapes had not been dreams. Sometimes, however, a memory of my sojourn underground with my dead wife came back to me and I would go half-mad.

At last, by the grace of Allah, we came safely to Bassora where we stayed a few days and then proceeded up the river to Baghdad.

I hurried to my own house in my own street, loaded with riches, and presented myself before my friends and the men and women of my family, who rejoiced over my return with great festivity and congratulated me on my safety. When I had given bounteous alms to the poor, the widow, and the orphan, and large presents to my friends and acquaintances, I shut my treasure in presses and gave myself up to every kind of pleasure and diversion in the company of gracious people.

But all that I have told you is nothing to that which I will tell you tomorrow, if Allah wills.

So spoke Sindbad on that day; and afterwards gave a hundred pieces of gold to the porter and invited him to dine that night in company with the great folk who were present. When the feast was over, all the guests returned marvelling to their own homes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

Sindbad the Porter returned to his own home, where he dreamed all night of the story he had heard. When he returned to the house of Sindbad the Sailor, his soul was still sick with the thought of how his friend had been buried alive. Yet, as the cloth was already laid, he took his place with the others to eat and drink and thank Allah therefor. At length silence fell upon all and Sindbad the Sailor related:

THE FIFTH VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

After my fourth voyage I lived so pleasantly, so joyfully, that I soon forgot my past sufferings and remembered only the great profit which my extraordinary adventures had gained for me. You will not be surprised, then, to hear that I soon obeyed the promptings of my soul when she incited me to further travel among the lands of men.

I bought a quantity of that merchandise which I knew by experience would meet with a ready sale at

high prices and, after it had been packed in bales, took it downstream with me to Bassora.

Walking on the quay there, I saw a new-built ship of great size, which pleased me so much that I bought her out of hand. I hired an experienced captain and a sturdy crew; then had my bales of merchandise carried on board by the slaves whom I was taking with me to serve me on the voyage and, lastly, accepted as passengers certain honest merchants who payed their money upon the spot. Being this time master of the ship, I felt that I would be able to assist the captain with my knowledge of the sea.

We set sail light-heartedly from Bassora and met favourable winds and a calm sea. After buying and selling at various ports of call, we came one day to an uninhabited island whose sole building appeared to be a large white dome. This I recognised as a Roc's egg, but unfortunately I said nothing about it to my passengers; so that, when they went ashore, they found no better employment than to throw great stones at the shell of the egg. When the surface was broken, a liquid substance flowed forth and this, to their great surprise, was followed by one of the legs of the small Roc. The merchants went on with their work of destruction and, after killing the young bird, cut it in pieces and returned on board to tell me of their adventure. I was stricken with fear on hearing what they had done and cried: "We are lost! The father and mother will be here soon and they will destroy us; we must get away as quickly as we can!" I gave immediate orders for the sails to be set and we made for the open sea.

As we hurried away from the island the merchants set to work to cook the pieces of the bird; but they had hardly begun to eat when we perceived two great

clouds hiding the sun. These drew nearer and we saw that they were two gigantic Rocs; we heard the beating of their wings and their cries which were more terrible than thunder. When they were high above our heads we saw, moreover, that each carried in its talons a rock larger than our vessel.

Realising the kind of vengeance which they meant to take, we gave ourselves up for lost. Soon one of the birds let its missile fall directly above the boat; but our captain, with a dexterous turn of the tiller, threw us from our course. The mighty stone just missed us and opened up so great a well in the sea that we could see the bottom, and we were tossed up and down like a cork upon the consequent waves. Before these had subsided, the second bird let fall its rock, which struck our stern and, breaking the tiller into twenty pieces, swamped half of the vessel in the sea. Those of us who were not crushed to pieces were thrown into the water and dragged down by the waves.

I was able to rise to the surface through the desperate efforts which I made to save my life and, by good luck, managed to clamber on to one of the timbers of the lost ship. Sitting astride this I paddled with my feet and, by the aid of wind and current, reached an island, just as I was about to render my last breath to its Giver, from weariness, hunger, and thirst. I threw myself upon the beach and lay there for an hour until my heart had ceased its inordinate beating and strength had a little returned to me. Then I rose and began to make an examination of the island.

This time I did not have to go far, for Fate had carried me to a very garden of Paradise. On all sides, before my delighted eyes, were trees with golden fruit, cold silver streams, a thousand wings of birds, and close carpets of scented flowers.

I did not delay to eat the fruits, drink the water, and breathe in the refreshment of the flowers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

I stayed where I was, resting from my exertions until the evening; but when night fell and I knew myself alone upon the island among those trees, I became suddenly afraid, although beauty and peace surrounded me on every side. Therefore I could hardly sleep and, when I dozed, was visited by fearful nightmares. Dawn brought me a certain measure of tranquillity, so I rose and began to extend my exploration of the island. I soon came to a large pool into which dropped the waters of a fall and saw, sitting upon its edge, an old man, clothed in a great cloak of sewn leaves. "This is some shipwrecked sailor like myself," I thought.

I went up to the old man and wished him peace; but he only answered by signs. "How come you to be in this place, O venerable sheikh?" I asked; but he only shook his head sadly and signed with his hand, as much as to say: "I beg you to take me upon your shoulders and carry me across the stream, for I would pluck the fruits upon the other side." "Sindbad," I said to myself, "if you help this old man you will be doing a good deed." So I bent down and took him upon my shoulders, crossing his legs upon my chest, while he clasped my neck with his thighs and my

head with his arms. I carried him across the stream to the spot which he had indicated and then bent down again, saying: "Alight gently, O venerable stranger"; but he did not move, rather he pressed his thighs more tightly round my neck and weighed down upon my shoulders with all his weight.

I was surprised at this and looked more carefully at his legs, which I then saw to be black and rough and furry like the skin of a buffalo. A great fear took me and I tried to throw the old man to the earth, but he replied by pressing my throat until I was half strangled and dark shadows began to appear before my eyes. I made a last effort to dislodge my persecutor and then fell senseless to the ground.

When I came to myself, I found the old man still crouched on my shoulders, with this difference only, that he had slightly opened his legs to let the air return to my body. As soon as he saw that I was again breathing, he kicked me in the stomach until I got up, and then hunched down further upon my neck and signed to me, with one of his hands, to walk beneath the trees. When I did so, he leisurely plucked the fine fruits and ate them; each time I stopped against his will or went too fast he kicked me violently until I did as he wished. All that day he stayed upon my shoulders and I was no better than a beast of burden; and at night he made me lie down with him so that he could sleep without leaving his position. In the morning he woke me with a kick in the belly and made me carry him as before.

For the whole of the next day and night he stayed immovable upon my back, doing all his liquid and solid needs upon me, and urging me to my work with fist and feet.

I had never suffered such humiliation of spirit or

discomfort of body as I experienced in the service of that old man, who was as strong as a youth and as cruel as a donkey-driver; and yet I could find no way to get rid of him. I trudged up and down, cursing the virtuous impulse which had led me to help the sinister old man and begging for death rather than a continuance of this slavery.

One day, after weeks of servitude, I was carrying my rider under certain trees below which lay great gourds, and the idea came to me to use a gourd as a receptacle for wine. Picking up one of the largest, which was quite dry, I thoroughly emptied and cleaned it. Then I squeezed the grapes of a prolific vine into it and, carefully stopping the opening which I had cut, left it in the sun; so that, in a few days, it was filled with pure wine. When the fermentation had ceased I drank enough to increase my strength and help me to bear the weight of my burden, but not enough to make me drunk. Yet I felt a new man and very gay; for the first time, I began to jump from side to side with my rider, whose weight I did not feel, and went dancing and singing through the trees. I even clapped my hands in praise of my own dancing and made the glades re-echo with my peals of laughter.

When the old man saw me in this unaccustomed state and realised that my strength was doubled so that I carried him without fatigue, he signed to me to pass him the gourd. I did not wish to comply with this request, but my fear of the old man was too great for me to refuse. He took the gourd from my hand and, carrying it to his lips, took first a tentative taste and then drank it down to the last drop and threw the gourd far off among the trees.

Soon the wine began to work in his brain, for he had taken quite enough to make him drunk; first he danced

and jigged on my shoulders and then half collapsed with slack muscles, bending over to right and left and keeping his seat with difficulty.

Feeling that I was not clasped as strongly as usual, I unfastened his legs from my neck with a rapid movement and then, by an urge of my shoulders, threw the old man to the ground some feet away from me, where he lay without movement. Without more ado, I picked up a great rock from among the trees and, throwing myself upon my tormentor, smashed his skull to pieces and mingled his blood with his flesh. Thus he died; may Allah have no compassion upon his soul!

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

When I saw the corpse, my spirit grew as light as my body and I ran joyfully down to the seashore, where Destiny willed I should find a party of sailors who had disembarked from an anchored ship to hunt for water and fruit. They were astonished to see me and clustered round, asking questions. I told them what had happened to me both on sea and land: that is to say, that I had been wrecked and afterwards reduced to bestial servitude by the old man whom I had eventually killed.

On hearing my tale, the sailors cried: "It is a matter of marvel that you escaped from that old man; he is known to all mariners as the Old Man of the Sea

and you are the first whom he has not strangled with his thighs. Praise be to Allah that He has delivered you!"

They took me to their ship, where the captain received me kindly and gave me clothes to cover my nakedness. When he had heard my story he also congratulated me, and then set sail.

After many days and nights at sea we entered the port of a well-built city upon a certain coast. I soon learned that it was called the City of Apes because of the prodigious quantity of those beasts living in the trees which surrounded it.

I disembarked with one of the merchants who was on board, wishing to see if I could find some employment in the city. As we were walking away from the harbour, the merchant, who had become very friendly towards me, gave me a linen bag, saying: "Fill this with pebbles and go join the crowd of people whom you will see issuing from the gates. Act in every way as they act and you will earn more than enough money for your livelihood."

Following his instructions, I filled the bag with pebbles and joined myself to a troop which I saw come out from the city gates, each carrying a bag similar to my own. My friend, the merchant, recommended me in the highest terms to these people, saying: "Here is a poor stranger; if you will teach him to earn his daily bread, Allah will reward you."

After walking for some time, we came to a deep valley, covered with trees so tall that no man might essay to climb them; and the branches of these were heavy with apes and a large thick-skinned fruit called cocoa-nuts.

We halted below the trees and my companions, setting their bags on the ground, began to bombard the

apes with pebbles; and I did the like. The animals were excited to fury and answered each stone by throwing down a cocoa-nut, so that we gathered a vast quantity of this fruit and put it into our bags. When they were full we put them on our shoulders and returned to the city, where my friend the merchant took back the sack which he had given me and gave me the value of its contents in silver. I went out every day with the cocoa-nut hunters and sold my booty in the city; thus, before long, I saved a considerable sum of money, which I increased by shrewd sale and exchange till it became enough to pay my passage to the Sea of Pearls.

I took a great quantity of cocoa-nuts with me, which I exchanged among the islands for pepper and cinnamon; these last two commodities I sold so advantageously during the rest of my journey that, when at last I came to the Sea of Pearls, I was able to take divers into my service.

My luck never once deserted me in the pearl fishing and it was not long before I had collected an immense fortune. Then, being unwilling to put off my return any longer, I bought a quantity of the best aloe-wood, such as abounds in these idolatrous seas, and took a boat which brought me safely to Bassora. When I reached Baghdad, I ran to my own house in my own street, where I was joyfully received by my friends and relations.

As I had returned richer than I had ever been before, I spread fortunate ease about me by making judicious presents to those who needed them. I myself settled down to a life of perfect peace and happiness.

Dine with me tonight, my friends, and tomorrow you shall hear of my sixth voyage which turned out

so astonishing that, in hearing of it, you will forget all the adventures I have yet told you.

When Sindbad the Sailor had made an end of the account of his fifth journey, he gave a hundred gold pieces to the porter, who after feasting, departed with the other marvelling guests. Next day Sindbad told the same company the tale of:

THE SIXTH VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

Companions and dear guests, I was sitting one day taking the air before my door and feeling as happy as I had ever felt, when I saw a group of merchants passing in the street who had every appearance of returned travellers. This sight recalled to me how joyful a thing it is to return from journeying, to see the birth land after far voyage, and the thought made me long to travel again. I equipped myself with merchandise of price, suitable for the sea, and left the city of Baghdad for Bassora. There I found a great ship filled with merchants and notables as well provided with goods for trading as myself; so I had my bales carried on board and soon we peacefully set sail from Bassora.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

We sailed from place to place and from city to city buying and selling and rejoicing in the new sights

which met our gaze. But one day, as we were lying on the deck with a feeling of perfect safety, we heard despairing cries and, looking up, saw that they were uttered by the captain, who also threw his turban far from him and, beating himself in the face, pulled out handfuls of his beard.

We clustered round him, asking what the matter was, and he answered: "All good folk here assembled, learn that we have been driven from the seas we knew into an unknown ocean where we shall surely perish, unless Allah sends something to save us. Let us pray to Him!"

So saying the captain climbed the mast and was about to trim the sails, when a great wind rose and, striking us full in the face, broke our rudder to pieces just as we were passing a high mountain. The captain swarmed down the mast, crying: "There is no power or might save in Allah! None can arrest the force of Destiny! My friends, we are altogether lost!"

While the passengers were weeping and saying farewell to each other, the sea rose in her fury and broke our vessel into fragments against the mountain of which I have spoken. We were all thrown into the water, where some were drowned and others, among whom was myself, were able to save themselves by clinging to the lower crags.

Now this mountain rose straight up from the strand of a large island, the beaches of which were covered with the remains of wrecked ships and every kind of jetsam. The place where we landed was strewn with a multitude of bales from which rich merchandise and costly ornaments had escaped.

I walked among these scattered treasures and soon found a little river of fresh water which, instead of flowing into the sea, as do all other rivers, came from

a cleft in the mountain and, running inland, at last plunged into a cave at the foot of it and disappeared.

Nor was that all; the banks of this stream were thick underfoot with rubies and other coloured precious stones, and all crumbling with diamonds and pieces of gold and silver. Also its bed was littered with gems beyond price, instead of pebbles; and the whole region, beneath and beside the water, blazed with the reflected light of so much riches that the eyes of the beholder were dazzled. Chinese and Comarin aloes of the first quality grew about the water. In this island there was a stream of raw liquid amber, of the colour of tar, which flowed down to the sea shore, being melted to the consistency of boiling wax by the rays of the sun. Great fish would come out of the sea and drink greedily of this substance, which heated their bellies, so that after a certain time they would vomit upon the surface of the water. There it became hard and changed both its nature and colour; at last it was carried back to the beach in the form of ambergris, which scented the whole island. The liquid amber, which the fish did not swallow, also spread a perfume of musk about the shore.

All these riches were useless to man because none might touch upon that island and leave it alive, seeing that every ship which came near was dashed to pieces by the force of the waves.

Those of us who had been saved remained in sorrowful case upon the beach, desolate in the middle of great wealth and starving among the material for many feasts. Such food as we had we scrupulously divided; but my companions, who were not used like myself to the horrors of starvation, ate their shares in one or two meals and began to die off in a few days.

I was more careful, eating sparsely and only once a day. Also I had found a separate supply of provision of which I said nothing to my friends.

We who lived washed those who died and, wrapping them in shrouds made up of the rich fabrics which strewed the shore, buried them in the sand. To add to the hardships of the survivors, a sickness of the belly broke out among us caused by the moist air of the sea. All but myself of those who had not starved died of it, and I dug with my own hands a grave for the last of my companions.

In spite of my prudent abstention, very little of my food remained; so, seeing that death was not far off, I wept and cried aloud: "Ah, why did you not die while there remained comrades who would have washed you and given you to the earth? There is no power or might save in Allah!" Then I began to bite the hands of my despair.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come

She said:

I rose and dug a deep grave for myself, saying: "When I feel that my last moment is at hand, I will drag myself here and die in my grave; for surely the wind will bury me with sand." As I was engaged in this work, I cursed myself bitterly for my foolishness in voyaging again after having learned five times that death lies in wait for the wanderer. "How many times did you repent and begin again?" I said to myself.

"Had you not enough riches laid by in Baghdad to suffice for the most reckless expenditure throughout two lifetimes?"

To these thoughts succeeded a more practical one, suggested by the appearance of the river. "As Allah lives," I thought, "this stream must have both a beginning and an end; now, I see the beginning but the end is hidden from me. The water flows below the mountain, therefore I will wager that it comes out the other side in one fashion or another. If that is so, my only hope of escape is to construct some kind of a vessel which will bear me down the current of the stream and through its subterranean course. If such is my destiny, I will find a way of safety beyond; if I die it will be no worse than the starvation which waits me here."

A little cheered by this desperate chance, I rose and began to put my plan into execution. I collected the larger branches of the Chinese and Comarin aloes and bound them together with cords. Using this as a foundation, I built a raft with ship's planks and furnishings which was nearly but not quite as broad as the river. Then I loaded the raft with some large sacks of emeralds, pearls, and other stones, choosing always the biggest from the heaps which surrounded me. I also placed on board some bales of chosen ambergris and the rest of my provisions. When the craft balanced well, I went on board, carrying two planks by way of oars, and confided myself to Allah, remembering these words of the poet:

Out of the country of oppression
Depart and save your spirit whole;
There are a thousand lands and but one soul,
So leave the land and keep the soul's possession.

Nothing unwritten shall surprise you,
Nothing which has not been for ages;
So hurry not for counsel to the sages,
But stay at home and let your soul advise you.

My raft was hurried by the current under the arch of the cave, and at once began to bang against the sides violently; while my head often came into contact with a rocky roof which I could not see because of the sudden darkness. Very soon I wished that I could return to the sands of my starvation, but the current grew stronger and stronger as I descended the underground river and the course of it went sometimes wide and sometimes narrow so that the moving shadows thickened about me and confused my eyes. Leaving go of my useless oars I threw myself flat down upon the raft to save my head from being crushed by any projection and, worn out by fear and exhaustion, fell into a deep sleep.

This sleep or swoon of mine seemed to last for more than a year; when I came to myself I was in full daylight and, opening my eyes, saw that I was lying upon the grass in a vast tract of meadow land and that my raft was fastened by the side of a river. About me were many Indians and Abyssinians.

When these men saw that I was awake they began to speak to me, but I did not understand their language and so could not answer them. I thought I was in a dream until a man came towards me who wished me peace in pure Arabic, saying: "Who are you and where have you come from and why have you journeyed to our country? We are farmers who, arriving to water our fields and plantations in this place, saw you come down stream asleep upon a raft which we stopped and fastened here by the bank, while we laid

you upon the grass to have your slumber out. We wished you to wake yourself so that you should not be afraid. Tell us by what strange adventure you have come to this place." "As Allah lives, my master," I answered, "first give me something to eat, for I am starving. Then ask me as many questions as you like." The man hastened to bring me food and I ate until I was satisfied and strengthened. Feeling my soul come back to its body, I thanked Allah and congratulated myself upon my escape from the underground river. Then I told the men who surrounded me the whole story of my adventures on the island.

They marvelled much at what they heard and began talking together in their unknown tongue; and he who spoke Arabic translated their thoughts to me as he had translated my tale to them. It appeared that they wished to conduct me to their king that he might hear my adventures for himself; when I gladly consented, they formed a procession and led me to the city, carrying with them my raft, just as it was, loaded with ambergris and sacks of jewels.

The king kindly received me and, at his request, I gave a complete recital of all that had happened to me, without omitting a single detail. But it would be useless to repeat it in this place.

The king of Serendib, for such was the name of the island, congratulated me heartily upon having come alive out of such perils; and, in return, I hastened to open my bales and sacks in his presence that he might see that there was profit attached to strange and fantastic voyaging.

The king admired my collection, for he was very learned in the matter of precious stones; and was pleased to accept samples which I offered him of every kind of jewel, together with a few large pearls and

pure ingots of gold and silver. In recognition of my generosity, he loaded me with honours and gave me lodging in his own palace, so that from that day I was his friend and the friend of the chief nobles in the island. They asked me about my own country and I described it to them; then I questioned them about theirs and received some interesting answers. I learned that the island of Serendib was twenty-four parasangs long by twenty-four wide; that it held the highest mountain in the whole world, on which our father Adam had lived for certain of his days; and that it was rich in pearls and precious stones (though not so fine as mine) and many cocoa-nut palms.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come

She said:

One day the king of Serendib questioned me concerning the internal affairs of Baghdad and the government of the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid; I told him how just and benevolent our ruler was and laid considerable stress upon his virtues and excellent qualities. The king of Serendib marvelled at what I told him, and said: "I see that the khalifat is versed in wisdom and the true art of government. I have conceived an affection for him through the account which you have given me; therefore I am very anxious to send him some present worthy of himself, and appoint you the bearer of it." "I am entirely at your orders, my master," I answered. "I swear that I

will faithfully remit your gift to the khalifat and that he will be enchanted by it. I will also tell him that you are a good friend and that he may count on your alliance."

Without delay the king gave orders to his chamberlains. The present which he sent by me to Haroun Al-Rachid consisted of: a large jar half a foot high and a finger thick, carved from a single ruby of perfect colour, filled with round white pearls as large as nuts; a carpet made from the skin of a gigantic serpent with scales each as large as a dinar and having this virtue, that whatsoever sick man lay down upon it should be healed; two hundred balls of camphor, in its purest state each as large as a pistachio; two elephant's tusks twelve cubits long and two cubits round the base; and lastly, a beautiful girl of Serendib, smothered in rich jewellery.

At the same time the king gave me a letter for the Commander of the Faithful, saying: "Make my excuses to the khalifat for sending so small a present and tell him that I love him with all my heart. . . . Yet, Sindbad, if you would rather stay in our kingdom, you shall be in everything our favourite and we will send another messenger to Baghdad instead of you." "As Allah lives, O king of time," I cried, "your generosity is a royal generosity; my spirit bows beneath your gifts, but there is a boat just starting for Bassora and I am very anxious to go aboard her and see my friends, my children, and my native land once more."

The king, who did not wish to constrain me against my will, at once sent for the captain of the ship and the merchants who would sail with me and gave me into their safe keeping with a thousand recommendations, paying my passage money himself, and pre-

senting me with many precious gifts, which I still keep in memory of him.

After saying farewell to the king and to all the friends whom I had made in that delightful island, I set sail and at last came, through the mercy of Allah, safely to Bassora and thence to Baghdad. The first thing I did on landing was to hasten to the palace, where I was granted a reception by the Prince of Believers. I kissed the earth between his hands and, giving him the letter and present with which I had been intrusted, told him all my adventures from beginning to end.

When the khalifat had read the letter from the king of Serendib and examined the presents, he asked me if the monarch, who had sent them, was really as rich as these things seemed to imply. "O Commander of the Faithful," I answered, "I can witness that the king of Serendib does not exaggerate, and further that he adds to his wealth both justice and wise government. He is the sole kadi in his kingdom and the people are so contented that there is never friction between them and their ruler. Indeed he is worthy of your friendship, O king!"

"What you have told me and the letter which I have just read," returned the khalifat, "prove to me that the king of Serendib is a good man, filled with wisdom and worldly knowledge. Happy is the people which he governs, say I!" Then the khalifat presented me with a robe of honour and rich gifts; and, after rewarding me with privileges, commanded the cleverest scribes of his palace to write down all my story that it might be treasured among the papers of his reign.

I hastened to my own house in my own street, and lived there, surrounded by riches and respect, among my friends and relations, quite forgetting my past

troubles and having no other care than to squeeze from this life all the joys of which it is capable.

Such is the story of my sixth voyage. Tomorrow, dear guests, if Allah wills, I will tell you the tale of my seventh voyage which is fuller of astonishing prodigies than the other six put together.

Then Sindbad the Sailor feasted his guests and dismissed them, giving a further hundred gold pieces to Sindbad the Porter who returned home marvelling at all he had heard.

Next morning Sindbad the Landsman made his prayer and returned, as he had been asked to do, to the palace of the other Sindbad.

When all the guests were assembled and had eaten, drunken, chatted, laughed, and listened to fair music, they ranged themselves in a silent circle around their host, who described to them:

THE SEVENTH & LAST VOYAGE OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

I MUST TELL you, my dear friends, that, after my return from my sixth voyage, I put aside all thoughts of making any further journey; for my age was beginning to be against prolonged absences and I had no longer any desire for new adventures after the dangers which I had already run. I was the richest man in all Baghdad and the khalifat would often send for me to hear me tell of the strange things which I had seen during my voyages.

One day, when Haroun Al-Rachid had called me into his presence, I was on the point of beginning a recital of my travels, when he said: "Sindbad, you must carry my answer and my present to the king of Serendib; for none knows the way to his kingdom

better than you and he will doubtless be delighted to see you again. Make ready to start today; for it would be little worthy of us to keep the king of that island waiting for our answer."

The world darkened before my eyes and I was in the limit of perplexity, yet I hid my feelings in order not to displease the khalifat and, although I had sworn never again to leave Baghdad, kissed the earth between his hands and told him that I was ready. He gave me ten thousand dinars for the expenses of my journey and intrusted me with a letter written in his own hand and the presents he intended for the king of Serendib. These presents were: a magnificent bed of scarlet velvet worth an enormous sum of money, two other beds of different colours, a hundred robes of Kufa and Alexandrian silk, fifty sewn in Baghdad, a vase of white carnelian dating from old time and enriched with the presentment of a bowman aiming at a lion, a pair of wonderful Arab horses and other things too numerous to mention.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come

She said:

I left Baghdad much against my will and embarked at Bassora on board a ship which was about to set sail. At the end of two months to a day we arrived safely at Serendib and I hastened to lay the letter and the presents before the king. Seeing me again and appreciating the courtesy of the khalifat, that

kindly monarch rejoiced and wished to keep me with him for a long while; but I only consented to stay for a few days' rest and then, taking leave of him, re-embarked in my ship for Bassora, loaded with further presents.

The wind favoured us and we voyaged along pleasantly, talking among ourselves of many things; but one day, when we were a week out from the island of Sin where the merchants on board had traded, a terrible storm broke over our heads and heavy rain fell upon us. We hastened to cover our merchandise with canvas as a protection from the wet and then prayed to Allah against the dangers of our journey. While we were doing so, the captain girt up his robe and, climbing to the mast, looked for a long time to right and left. He descended very yellow about the face and, looking upon us with an expression of despair, silently beat himself about the face and snatched at his beard. We ran to him, asking what was the matter, and he answered: "Pray to Allah that He may lift us from the gulf into which we have fallen; or rather weep and say your farewells, for the current has driven us from our path and thrown us into the last seas of the world."

Then the captain opened his sea-chest and took from it a linen bag, containing a powder not unlike crushed ashes. He wetted this substance with water and, after waiting a little, sniffed some of it up his nose; then he took a small book from the chest, intoned a few pages of it and then turned to us, saying: "My magic book confirms my gravest fears. That land which you see upon the horizon is the Clime of Kings, where our lord Sulayman lies buried (upon whom be prayer and peace!). Monsters and terrible serpents inhabit that coast and the sea is full of

gigantic fishes, who can swallow down a whole ship at a single mouthful. Now you know the worst, so farewell!"

We remained frozen to the decks with horror, expectant of some fearful end. Suddenly the whole boat was lifted up and then cast down again among the waves, while a cry more terrible than thunder rose from the sea. The ocean boiled beside us and we saw a marine monster, as great as a mountain, plunging towards us, followed by a second greater still, and a third larger than the first two put together. This last creature leaped suddenly from the gulf of the sea, and, opening a mouth like a valley between two hills, swallowed our ship to three-quarters of its length with all that was in it. I had just time to run to the top of the slanting deck and leap thence into the sea, when the monster drew the whole vessel down into its belly and disappeared into the depths with its two companions.

I succeeded in clambering on one of the planks which had started from the ship under the monster's jaws and, after some hours of tossing to and fro, was thrown on an island covered with fruit trees and watered by a clear and pleasant river. As I wished to regain my own country, and as I saw that the river ran very fast indeed, making a noise which could be heard far off, the idea came to me to make a raft, as I had done on the island of jewels, and let myself be carried down by the current. "If I save myself in that way," I thought, "all will be for the best and I swear never again in all my life to allow the word *voyage* upon my tongue. If I perish in the attempt, still all will be for the best, as I will be quit of danger and privation for ever." After I had eaten a little

fruit, I collected a great quantity of the larger branches of a tree which I did not know, but which turned out afterwards to be sandal-wood of the very finest quality. As I had no ropes, I bound these together with the flexible stems of certain climbing plants and thus constructed a very large raft which I loaded with fruit for my journey. I embarked, crying: "If I am saved, it will be by Allah!" and had hardly pushed my craft from off the bank when it was hurried down stream at a prodigious rate so that I fell, powerless with vertigo like a drunken fowl, on to the heaps of fruit.

When I came to myself I looked about me and was dazed with a noise as of thunder; the river was one gallop of boiling foam, borne quicker than the wind, towards a yawning precipice which I heard rather than saw.

Giving myself up for lost, I clung with all my strength to the branches of the raft and, shutting my eyes so as not to see the mangling of my own body, prayed to Allah before my death. Suddenly, as I was over the very lips of the abyss, I felt the raft halted upon the water and opened my eyes to see that my craft had been caught in an immense net thrown by men from the bank. I was dragged towards the shore and lifted from the meshes of the net, more dead than alive, while my raft was pulled up upon dry land.

As I lay shivering upon the ground, an old man with a white beard advanced towards me and, giving me courteous welcome, covered me with warm garments which comforted me very much.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

My strength came back under the solicitous rubbing of the old man, so that I was able to sit up, although I could not speak. My saviour supported me on his arm and led me slowly to a hammam, where I was given a bath which quite restored my spirit, and exquisite perfumes to smell and pour upon my body. Then the old man conducted me to his own house where his family rejoiced at my coming and received me in all friendship. I was seated upon a diwan in the reception hall and served with excellent food and a fresh drink of water scented with flowers. Incense was burnt about me and slaves brought warm perfumed water for my hands and napkins hemmed with silk for my beard and lips. When I was well restored by all these attentions, my host took me to a well-furnished chamber and discreetly left me alone, providing me with slaves who visited me from time to time to see that I lacked nothing.

I was entertained in this way, without being asked any questions, for three whole days, until my strength had completely returned to me and my heart become quiet; then the old man sat down beside me and greeted me courteously, saying: "O guest, may your sojourn among us be calm and pleasurable. I give thanks to Allah that He placed me upon your path to save you from the precipice. Now will you tell me who you are and whence you come?" I confounded myself in thanks to the old man for having saved my life and for his subsequent entertainment of me, and then said: "I am called Sindbad the Sailor, because

of the many voyages I have made upon the sea. Those strange things which I have seen would serve as a lesson for the attentive reader even were they written with a needle upon the corner of an eye." With that I told the old man the story of my life from beginning to end, without omitting a single detail.

For a full hour he sat silent from astonishment, but at length raised his head, saying: "Now, dear guest, I advise you to sell your merchandise without further delay, for, apart from its excellent quality, it is a great rarity here."

I was astonished at these words and had no idea what they meant, since I had been cast naked among these people; yet, being unwilling to let slip any opportunity, I put on a knowing air as I answered: "That may well be." "Take no care for your goods, my child," continued my host, "you have but to come down with me to the market and I will do the rest. If a suitable bid is made we will accept it; if not we will keep your valuables in my storehouses until we can get a better price."

I did not let my perplexity appear, but answered: "O venerable uncle, whatever seems good to you is right in my eyes. After all you have done for me, I have no thought which is not yours." With that I rose and went with him to the market.

When we arrived I received the greatest surprise of my life; for there was my raft, surrounded by brokers and merchants who were respectfully examining it with many wise nods. On all sides I heard such expressions as: "Ya Allah, it is a marvellous quality of sandal! Never have we seen so fine a wood!" Then at last I understood in what my merchandise consisted, and thought it fitting to assume a proud and reserved expression.

Soon my venerable host bade the chief broker begin the auction, which he did, opening the bidding at a thousand dinars. "This raft of sandal-wood for a thousand dinars!" he cried, and my friend exclaimed: "Two thousand!" and another cried: "Three thousand!" When ten thousand was bid, the broker looked at me, saying: "There is no advance upon ten thousand." "I will not sell for that," I answered.

"My child," said the old man to me, "our market is not very prosperous just now and all goods have fallen in value. You had better accept this price, or, if you like, I will add a hundred dinars and buy the lot for ten thousand one hundred." "As Allah lives," I answered, "for you and for you alone, good uncle, I consent to sell." At once my host ordered his slaves to carry all the wood to his storehouses and conducted me back to his house, where he paid me the money agreed upon and fastened it for me in a strong locked box, thanking me all the while for my benevolence.

Later a cloth was spread for us and we ate and drank with merry conversation. When we had washed our hands, the old man said: "My child, there is a favour which I beg you to grant me." "Any favour were easy from me to you, uncle," I answered; and he continued: "My child, I am a very old man and have no son; yet I have a beautiful young daughter who will be extremely rich when I die. If you will promise to remain with us, I will gladly marry you to this girl, and then you will be master of all I possess and all I direct in the city; you will inherit both my authority and my wealth."

I lowered my head and remained silent, so that he continued: "Do what I ask and you shall not lose by

it. If you will, I modify my condition and only stipulate that you remain here during my lifetime; after my death you shall be free to take my daughter with you to your own country." "As Allah lives," venerable father," I replied, "I have no opinion other than your opinion, and am more than willing for you to direct my destiny, since every time I have tried to do so myself evil has followed. I gladly consent to this marriage."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

The old man rejoiced exceedingly at my consent and sent for the kadi and witnesses, who married me to the daughter of my host. A great feast was held and at last I was conducted into the presence of my bride whose face I had not yet seen. I found her admirable both in disposition and beauty, and was delighted to discover that she wore jewels, ornaments, silks, and brocades, worth thousands and thousands of gold pieces. We learned to love each other and lived together for a long time with sport and joy.

At length my father-in-law passed into the peace and mercy of Allah and we gave him a sumptuous funeral. I inherited all his possessions; his slaves became my slaves and his goods my goods, and all the merchants of the city named me their chief in place of the dead, so that I had occasion to observe the

customs and manners of the place more closely than I had done before.

One day it came to my notice that the people of the city suffered a change every year in Spring: this physical process lasted for a day and at the end of it, the men of the place had wings upon their shoulders and could fly high up into the vault of the air. During the time which this change lasted they were never out of the sky and left only their women and children in the city, because these did not grow wings. Though this circumstance was astonishing enough, I soon got used to it; but in course of time I began to feel shame to be the only wingless man in the city and to have to stay down with the women and children. I tried to find out how to grow wings on my shoulders, but my fellows either could not or would not tell me. I knew dark hours of mortification that I, Sindbad the Sailor, should not be known also as Sindbad the Airman.

One day I took aside a certain merchant whom I had helped in different ways and begged him to allow me to cling to him when he next went aloft and thus experience a new kind of voyage. At first the man would not listen to me, but at length I cajoled him into consenting and, after joyfully telling my wife what I was about to do, took tight hold of his waist and was carried into the air by the oarage of his wings.

At first and for a long time we went straight up and mounted so high that I could hear the angels singing their holy songs under the vault of heaven. This wonderful music roused so great a religious emotion in me that I cried: "Praise be to Allah in the deep of the skies! Let all creatures glorify and adore him!"

Hardly had I pronounced these words when the winged man fell through the air like a thunderbolt, with a frightful curse, and descended so rapidly that I fainted away. I should infallibly have been dashed to pieces if we had not fallen upon the top of a mountain, where my carrier left me, with a devilish glance, and disappeared in the air upon his wings. Left alone upon this deserted peak, I knew not what to do nor how to return to my wife; therefore I cried: "There is no might nor power save in Allah! Each time I escape from one misfortune, I stumble upon a greater. Surely I deserve all that happens to me!" I sat down sadly upon a rock, trying to think of some escape from my present dilemma, when I saw two young boys approaching me, whose beauty was more than human. Each held a wand of red gold in his hand and leaned upon it as he walked.

I rose to my feet with alacrity and, walking towards them, wished them peace. They answered my greeting kindly so that I was encouraged to continue: "The blessings of Allah be upon you, O marvellous youths! Tell me who you are and what you are doing." "We are lovers of the true God," they answered and then, without further words, one of them pointed out a certain direction to me and, leaving me his gold wand, disappeared hand in hand with his companion.

I took the wand and began walking in the way which had been shown to me, thinking all the time of the surpassing beauty of my guides. Suddenly, on turning the corner of a rock, I saw a gigantic serpent holding in its mouth a man, of whom it had already swallowed three-quarters. The victim's head cried out to me: "O passer-by, save me from the maw of this serpent, and you shall never repent of your good-

ness!" I ran up behind the snake and dealt him so well aimed a blow with the red gold wand that he lay dead upon the ground. Then I stretched forth my hand and helped the man out of the belly which had swallowed him.

Looking closely at the man I had rescued, I recognised him for the flyer who had so nearly dashed me to pieces by hurling himself from the vault of the sky to the top of the mountain. Unwilling to bear malice, I said gently: "Is it thus that friends behave to friends?" "First I must thank you for saving me," he answered, "and then I will tell you something which you do not know. My fall from the sky was occasioned by your unfortunate mention of the Name. The Name has that effect upon all of us and we never speak it." "Do not blame me for my perfectly innocent words," I answered, "I promise not to mention the Name if only you will consent to take me back to my own house." Without answering, the flyer took me upon his back and in the twinkling of an eye set me down upon the terrace of my own house.

When my wife saw me again after so long an absence, she thanked Allah for my safety, and then said: "We must no longer dwell among these people, for they are the brothers of devils." "How then did your father live with them?" I asked; and she answered: "My father was not of them; he did not behave as they behave, and he did not lead their life. As he is dead, I suggest that we should leave this wicked city after selling such property and houses as we have in it."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

"You will gain much money, so that we can buy fair merchandise and depart to see your family and friends in Baghdad, where we can live in peace, safety, and submission to Allah."

Using all the ability which experience had given me, I sold my property bit by bit and realised a hundred for one on each gold piece which the things had cost my dead father-in-law. I bought merchandise and, hiring a vessel for myself and my wife, made a good trading voyage to Bassora. Thence we went up stream and soon entered Baghdad, the City of Peace.

At once I took my wife with me to my own house in my own street, where we were both received with cordial expressions of joy. I put my affairs in order, distributed my remaining merchandise among various shops, and could at last sit down calmly to receive the congratulations of my friends; they informed me that this last and longest of my voyages had kept me away from home for twenty-seven years. I told all those who gathered round me the story of my adventures and vowed that I would never leave Baghdad again; an oath which, as you may see for yourselves, I have scrupulously kept. You must not think that I omitted to give long thanks to Allah for having saved me from so many and so great dangers, in spite of the numerous occasions on which I had tempted providence, and brought me back to my family and friends.

Such, dear guests, was my seventh and last voyage, which definitely cured me of any further desire for travel.

When Sindbad the Sailor had finished his tale, amid a hushed and attentive audience, he turned to Sindbad the Porter, saying: "Now, my friend, consider the labours which I have accomplished and the difficulties which I have overcome, and tell me if your estate of porter has not made for a more tranquil life than that which Destiny reserved for me. It is true that you have remained poor while I have become fabulously rich, but has not each of us been rewarded according to his efforts?" Sindbad the Porter kissed his host's hands, saying: "As Allah is with you, my master, excuse the ill-timed inconsequence of my song!"

Sindbad the Sailor gave a feast to his guests which lasted thirty nights and then appointed Sindbad the Porter to be his major-domo, so that the two lived together in perfect friendship and joy until they were visited by that which breathes upon delight, which snaps the links of friendship, which destroys palaces and raises tombs where once they stood: by bitter death. Glory be to the Living who dies not!

When Shahrazade, the wazir's daughter, had finished the tale of Sindbad the Sailor, she saw the approach of morning, and fell silent for very weariness.

Little Doniazade, who had listened to all the astonishing narrative with wide open eyes, jumped up from her carpet and threw her arms about her sister's neck, crying: "O Shahrazade, how sweet and tender, how pure and delicious, how fresh and savoury have been all your words! What a bold, wonderful, and terrible man Sindbad the Sailor must have been!"

Shahrazade smiled at her sister, saying: "The whole story is as nothing to that which I would tell

you tomorrow night if Allah and the good pleasure of the king should spare my life."

Then King Shahryar, who had found the voyages of Sindbad much longer than the one which he had made with his brother Shahzaman, when the Jinni appeared to them with his box in the grassland beside the sea, turned to Shahrazade, saying: "In truth I do not see what further tale you can tell me. I should like one well-stuffed with poems, such as you have already promised me. If you do not care to fulfil that promise your head shall join the others which have gone before it." "Strangely enough," answered Shahrazade, "I have been holding in reserve for you, O auspicious King, a tale which will satisfy you completely; for it is infinitely more delicious than any others which I have told you. You may judge for yourself by hearing the title: The Tale of Zumurrud the Beautiful, and Ali Shar, Son of Glory."

"I will not kill her until after that one," thought King Shahryar to himself; then he took her in his arms and passed the rest of the night with her.

In the morning he rose and went down to his hall of justice, where the diwan was filled with a crowd of wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, and people of the palace. Among them stood Shahrazade's father, the grand-wazir, who held his daughter's shroud over his arm and made no doubt that she was already dead. But the king said nothing upon this subject; instead he continued to judge, to raise folk to employment, to take away office, and to govern the kingdom until nightfall. Then, when the diwan rose, he re-entered his palace, leaving the grand-wazir still in a state of great perplexity.

King Shahryar went to the apartment of Shahrazade and they did together that which was usual for them.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come

Little Doniazade waited till the act was finished and then cried from her carpet:

"O sister, why do you not begin the tale of Zumurrud the Beautiful, and Ali Shar, Son of Glory?"

Shahrazade answered smiling: "I only wait for the permission of our charming king."

"You may begin!" cried Shahryar.

And Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF ZUMURRUD, THE BEAUTIFUL, AND ALI SHAR, SON OF GLORY

It is related, O auspicious King, that there was once in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a rich merchant in the land of Khorasan, called Glory, who had a son more beautiful than the full moon, whose name was Ali Shar.

One day, the merchant Glory, who was far advanced in age, felt threatened by the sickness of death; so he called his son to him, saying: "My son, the end of my destiny is in sight and I wish to make a recommendation to you." "What recommendation is that, my father?" answered Ali Shar, in a sorrowful voice; and Glory continued: "I advise you never to bind yourself in any relation or have to do at all with the world which I am leaving; for the world is like a forge: if it does not burn you with its fire, or put out your eyes with its sparks, it will certainly suffocate you with its smoke. A poet has said of it:

On the black road of life think not to find
Either a friend or lover to your mind;
If you must love, oh, then, love solitude,
For solitude alone is true and kind.

Another said:

The picture of this world for all to see,
Is painted on both sides? That well may be.
Hypocrisy and lies are on the front
And on the back lies and hypocrisy.

Another has said:

Preposterous futility
Is the world's wear,
Its very coat.
If Allah sends
One or two friends
When the world's bare,
Then use them sparingly
As antidote
For the world's care.

When young Ali Shar heard these words of his dying father he said: "O father, I will in all things obey you. Have you any further advice to give me?" Then said the merchant Glory: "Do good, when you can; but do not expect to be paid either with gratitude or good in return for your good. Also remember, my child, that an occasion for doing good does not arise every day." "I will obey you," said Ali Shar. "Are these all your recommendations?" The merchant continued: "Do not riot away the riches I leave you, for a man's only claim to consideration is his money. A poet has said:

Those who abused my open hand of old,
Now it is closed are still abusing it.
I have made enemies in making gold,
But many more by losing it."

Then the old man went on: "Do not neglect the advice of those with more experience than yourself, and never think it time lost when you go out of your way to seek counsel of the wise. A poet has said:

If you your face would find,
One glass will do;
But you need two
To see yourself behind.

And my last word is this: beware of wine. It is the root of all evil, it steals away the brains and makes the drinker a thing for laughter and disdain. . . . Such is my advice to you, given from the ultimate threshold my dear son. Follow these precepts and my blessing will follow you."

The venerable merchant Glory shut his eyes for a moment and gathered together all his strength. Then he lifted his index finger to the level of his glance and recited his act of faith, on the wings of which his spirit passed into the infinite mercy of Allah.

After the son and all the folk of the house had wept bitterly, rich and poor, great and small followed the funeral of the old man; and, when his body had been laid in the earth, these words were written upon the stone of his tomb:

When I was alive
I was dust which was,
But now I am dust in dust
I am dust which never was.

So much for the merchant Glory.

After his father's death, Ali Shar went on trading in the principal shop of the market and scrupulously followed the advice which had been given him, especially in so far as it concerned his relations with his kind, for a whole year; but at the end of that time he allowed himself to be led away by lewd lads, sons of harlots, shameless bastards. He took to the company of these with frenzy and knew their mothers and their sisters, who were wanton wretches, daughters of dogs; he plunged up to the neck in debauchery, swimming in wine and a wicked expense of gold in the opposite way from salvation. As his mind was not healthy, he argued to himself that it was necessary for him to use the riches which his father had left him, if he did not wish, in his turn, to leave them to others.

He followed this line of thought so consistently, joining night to day at both ends with excesses, that he soon found it necessary to sell his shop, his house, his furniture, and all his garments; and a time came when he wore all his worldly goods upon his back.

Then he was able to see his folly clearly and understand the excellence of his father's advice; for the friends, whom he had sumptuously entertained and at whose doors he now knocked, one by one made some excuse to show him out. One day, when he had no food left, he was obliged to go forth from the miserable khan at which he lodged and beg his way from house to house. His mendicant round took him past the market where he saw a crowd collected in a circle. He went towards these people to see what was happening and found that in the centre of the group of brokers, merchants, and purchasers, was a young white slave of elegant and delightful appearance.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventeenth Night
Had Come

She said:

She was five feet high and had roses instead of cheeks, well-placed breasts and, ah! a croup! You could apply to her, without fear of exaggeration, these words of the poet:

That her hair is dusk,
That her breath is musk,
Have I found to say;
That pearls in dew
Were melted, too,
In a secret way
To cause her breasts,
Where an argentine
Pale moonlight rests,
To move and shine
Have I found to say.
These things were not
Too fair for speech,
I have sung of each. . . .
Of her bottom, what
Have I found to say?

When Ali Shar cast a glance upon the beauties of this child, he marvelled at them and in his marvel stood stock still, forgetting for a little time his misery. He mingled with the crowd of merchants and they supposed that he would acquire the slave with the

riches left by the merchant Glory; for as yet they knew nothing of his ruin.

The chief broker took his place by the side of the slave and cried across the sea of craning heads: "Come, my masters, merchants all, urbane citizens, free traders of the desert! Here is the queen of moons, the pearl of pearls, the noble and modest virgin Zumurrud, the excitation of desires, the garden of all flowers! Open the auction! Let no one be afraid to open the auction! You have before you the queen of moons, the shy and virgin Zumurrud, the garden of all flowers!"

"I open at five hundred dinars!" cried one merchant. "And ten!" cried another. A deformed and hideous old man with bleary blue eyes, whose name was Rachid Al-Din, squeaked: "And a hundred!" But when a voice said: "And ten!" he raised the bid to a thousand dinars.

The other purchasers kept silent, so the broker turned to the slave's owner and asked if the old man's offer would suit. "It suits me" answered the owner, "but I have sworn not to let this slave be bought by any to whom she will not herself consent to be sold. Ask her consent, O broker." "O queen of moons," said the broker to Zumurrud, "do you want to belong to this admirable old man, this venerable Rachid Al-Din?" Zumurrud, the Beautiful, glanced at the man who was pointed out to her, whose ugliness I have tried to paint for you, and turned away with a gesture of disgust, crying: "O broker, do you not know that an old poet, who was yet by no means as hideous as this Rachid Al-Din, once said:

I prayed to kiss her scarlet mouth;
She did not take offence,

But only showed indifference.
The corner of her scarlet mouth
Dropped this sole answer to my prayer:
'I do not love white hair
Or wet white cotton in my scarlet mouth.' ''

"As Allah lives," said the broker to Zumurrud, "you are right to refuse; for a thousand dinars is no price at all. You are worth at least ten thousand in my opinion." He turned towards the crowd of purchasers and asked if anyone wished to buy the slave at the price already offered. "I do!" cried a voice. Zumurrud looked at the owner of this voice and saw that, though he was not so terribly ugly as Rachid Al-Din and had eyes which were neither blue nor bleary, his beard had been dyed red to make him look younger than he really was. "O shame," she cried, "to paint pictures upon the face of eld!"; and straightway extemporised these lines:

I might have taken you, I might
Have given you respect
As to an elderly religious saint,
If you had let your beard stay white;
But now that it is decked
With scarlet paint
You have become a horror absolute,
Would make a woman drop her fruit.

Hearing these verses, the broker said to Zumurrud: "As Allah lives, you have truth on your side!"

As soon as the second proposition had been refused, a third merchant offered to buy for the same price; But Zumurrud looked at the bidder and, finding that he was blind in one eye, burst out laughing and said:

"Do you not know the rhymed riddle about the one-eyed man? Listen.

Tell me the difference if you can
Between a liar and a one-eyed man.
You cannot? Yet I shall not call you dense,
Because there is not any difference."

Then the broker showed her a fourth bidder; but, seeing that he was a small man with a beard which fell down to his navel, she said: "As for this hairy little fellow, my opinion of him is summed up in these words of the poet:

He has a mighty beard to left and right. . . .
She was as sad as a cold winter night."

When the broker saw that she would not accept any of those who wished to buy her, he said to Zumurrud: "Dear mistress, look over all these merchants and noble purchasers and see if there are any who may have the luck to please you, so that I may offer you to them."

The delightful child closely regarded all the members of the crowd, one by one; and, when her gaze fell upon Ali Shar, a violent love for him was lighted in her heart, for he was indeed of extraordinary beauty and none might look upon him except passionately. Zumurrud quickly pointed him out to the broker, saying: "That is the purchaser I want, that youth with the gentle face and swaying body; for I find that he is much to my taste, that his blood mingles already with mine, and that he is lighter than a breeze from the north. It was of him the poet said:

We who are young, they who are old,
Have looked upon your grace,
O youth.

Behold,
In selfish ruth,
A thousand victims bring a thousand veils
To hide your face.

Another said of him:

Will you not understand my lord?
Beauty like yours is not to hoard,
But to be thrown adrift, a golden joy,
My lord, my gentle boy.
Your thighs are heavy and your waist is small;
Do you not feel the need for love at all,
My lord, my gentle boy?
To have your fair head rest upon my knee
Is heavy ecstasy.
And when you rise I do not feel relief,
But heavier grief,
My lord, my gentle boy.
God says to feed the hungry in their need. . . .
And murder is not praised by any creed,
My lord, my gentle boy.

Another has said:

His cheeks are carmine silk,
His spittle a sweet milk
To cure the heart;
His eyes' black honey puzzles those
Who build a tale in prose;
His eyes' black honey puzzles worse
Strange wistful race apart,
The men who carve an ecstasy in verse. . . .
And then the limbs which these have decked
Can make the greatest architect
Mistrustful of his art.

Another has said:

I sipped wine from his tongue
And I thought the world was young
And I played the very devil for his curls' sake.
Oh, the camphor of his teeth
And the amber of his breath. . . .
They turned him out of heaven for the girls' sake.

Another has said:

Gross fools with heavy wits,
May they be blasted soon
With all their censuring!
Dare to accuse him of a fault at times;
As if the moon
Were not a perfect thing
Because she shines and flits
In different parts of heaven's vault at times.

Another has said:

This fawn with curling hair
And cheeks of sunset rose,
I swear
Promised to meet me.
Yet he shut his eyes as he said yes;
It is after the hour, and I confess
I think that he will cheat me. . . .
But suppose. . . .

And yet another said of him:

Today
My friends object:
"How can you love a cheek with so strong down?"
"When ruddy Eden apples grow there,
Can you expect

The shady clusters not to show there,
From which they're grown?"
I say.

The broker was astonished to find so much talent in a slave so young. This he admitted to the slave's owner, and the latter said to him: "I can understand your surprise at so much beauty and so much wit; but I would have you know that this miraculous maiden, who shames the stars and sun, is not only conversant with all the most delicate and complicated stanzas of the poets, but is an excellent poetess herself. Also she can write with seven pens, the seven separate characters, and her hands are more precious than a guarded treasure. She knows the whole art of embroidery and silk weaving, so that each carpet or curtain which she makes sells in the market for fifty dinars. Note, also, that she only takes eight days to make the most beautiful of carpets or the most sumptuous curtain, so that he who buys her will certainly recoup all his expense in a few months."

The broker lifted his arms in admiration, crying: "How happy the man who shall take this pearl to his home and guard her as his secret treasure!" Then he went up to Ali Shar and, bowing almost to the earth before him, kissed his hand, and said. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come

She said:

"My master, it is great luck for you to be able to buy this treasure at a hundredth part of her true

worth. I see that the Giver has not been niggardly in blessing you. May the girl bring you happiness and good fortune!"

Ali Shar lowered his head, laughing to himself at the irony of Destiny, and whispering, as it were, in his own ear: "As Allah lives, they think that I am rich enough to buy this slave when I cannot enter into negotiations for a crust of bread! I will say neither yes nor no; lest I be covered with shame before all these merchants." So he lowered his eyes and did not speak.

Zumurrud sent him a glance of encouragement, and then, as he did not see it, said to the broker: "Lead me to him by the hand, for I wish to speak to him myself and persuade him to buy me. I am determined to belong to him and to no other."

When the broker did as she requested, the maiden stood before the young man in all her living beauty, and said to him: "O master of my love, O youth who has lit a fire within my body, why do you not offer the price? Why do you not offer more, if you think that I am worth it? Or less? I wish to be your slave at any price." Ali Shar sadly shook his head, saying: "There is no obligation to buy, just as there is no obligation to sell." "Master of my love," answered Zumurrud, "I see that you find the price of a thousand dinars too high; offer nine hundred and I shall belong to you." Then, when he continued to shake his head and say nothing, she continued: "Buy me for eight hundred," and then: "Buy me for seven hundred." and at last: "Buy me for one hundred." Said Ali Shar: "I have not quite that round sum in my pocket." "How much do you need to make it up?" she asked, laughing. "If you cannot find the whole hundred to-day you can pay later." "My mistress,"

he replied, "I have not a hundred dinars; I have not one dinar. As Allah lives, I have no more a white piece than a red piece, a dirham of silver than a dinar of gold. You lose your time with me; go, find another buyer."

When Zumurrud understood that the young man was without funds, she said: "Buy me all the same. Strike me upon the arm, wrap me in your mantle, and pass one of your arms about my waist; for those are the actions of acceptance." Ali Shar hastened to do these things, and while his arm was passing about her waist, she slipped a purse from her pocket into his hands, saying: "Here are a thousand dinars. Offer nine hundred of them to my master and keep a hundred of them to satisfy our more pressing needs." So Ali Shar paid nine hundred dinars to the merchant and took the slave with him to his lodging.

Zumurrud showed no surprise at finding that her master lived in a miserable little room, furnished only with a wretched, torn, and ancient mat; instead she handed him a further thousand dinars in a second purse, saying: "Run to the market and buy the finest furniture and carpets, the most delicate food and drink; and also bring me back a large square of Damascus silk of the rarest quality, garnet-red in tint; with reels of gold thread, silver thread, and silks of seven different colours. Also, do not forget large needles and a gold thimble for my middle finger."

When Ali Shar brought back these things to her, she spread the carpets on the floor, arranged the mattresses and diwans, tidied the chamber, and then set the cloth after having lighted torches.

They sat down together and ate and drank and were happy. Then they lay down upon the new bed and

satisfied each other, lying all night, close clasped in each other's arms, until morning brought an end to their pure delights and gay actions. Their love grew greater by proof, the words of it bit deeply into the heart of each.

When full morning had come, the diligent Zumurrud lost no time in setting to work. She took the garnet-red Damascus silk and, in a few days, had made a curtain of it, on which were presented with infinite art the forms of birds and beasts. There was no animal in the world, great or small, which she had not drawn with cunning silk upon that curtain. So lifelike was the embroidery that the four-footed beasts seemed to move and the birds to sing. In the middle of the curtain were great trees, loaded with their fruits, and the shadows of them were so faithfully shown that the eye of the beholder rested suddenly on delightful freshness. All this was achieved in eight days, neither more nor less! Glory be to Him who has given such dexterity to the fingers of His creatures!

As soon as the curtain was finished, Zumurrud glazed it, polished it, folded it, and gave it to Ali Shar, saying: "Carry this to the market and sell it at any shop for not less than fifty dinars; only be prepared not to give it up to any chance wayfarer who is not known in the market, otherwise a cruel separation will come upon us. We have enemies who lie in wait for us; therefore beware of the stranger." Ali Shar approved her condition and, going to the market, sold the marvellous curtain for fifty dinars to a merchant who was known to him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come

She said:

Again he bought enough silk and gold thread and silver thread to make a new curtain or some fair carpet; and carried all to Zumurrud, who set to work with so much will that, at the end of eight days, she had completed a carpet even more beautiful than the first, which also fetched the sum of fifty dinars. For a whole year the two lived in this way, eating and drinking, and not forgetting to satisfy their love, which grew greater and greater every day.

One day Ali Shar left the house carrying a packet in which was a carpet made by Zumurrud; and walked to the market to offer his ware to the merchants. He handed it to the broker, and the latter was crying it for sale in front of the shops when a Christian passed that way: one of those folk who swarm at the gates of markets and importune buyers and sellers with offers of assistance.

This Christian came up to Ali Shar and the broker and offered sixty dinars for the carpet, but Ali Shar, who hated and mistrusted his tribe and also recalled the advice of Zumurrud, said that he would not sell. Then the Christian offered a hundred dinars and the broker whispered in Ali Shar's ear not to let so excellent a chance escape. The broker had already been bribed with ten dinars by the Christian to give this advice; he worked so well upon Ali Shar that the latter at last consented to sell for a hundred dinars, took the money with a certain apprehension, and left the market.

On his way home he looked round and saw that the

Christian was following him; so he stopped and asked: "What are you doing in this district where people of your kind do not come, O Christian?"

"Excuse me my master," answered the other, "but I have an errand to do at the end of this street, Allah preserve you!" Ali Shar continued on his way, but, happening to look round as he reached the door of his lodging, he saw that the Christian had followed him by a side street and was coming towards him. "Why are you following me in this way, evil Christian?" he cried angrily. "O my master," said the other, "it is quite by chance that I am here; but now I beg you to give me a mouthful of water, for I am burning with thirst. Allah will reward you!" Thinking to himself: "As Allah lives, it shall never be said that a Mussulman refused a drink to a mad dog!" Ali Shar entered the house, took up a water-jar, and was about to return to the Christian when Zumurrud, who had heard the door opening, came out to meet him, much moved by his long absence. As she kissed him, she said: "Why are you so late in coming back today? Tell me, have you sold the carpet and was it to some reputed merchant or to a stranger?" Visibly troubled, Ali Shar answered: "I am a little late because the market was very full, but I managed to sell the carpet to a merchant of my acquaintance." "As Allah lives," said Zumurrud doubtfully, "my heart is not easy. Why are you carrying that jar?" "I am going to give a drink to the broker, who came back with me," answered Ali Shar; but this reply did not satisfy the slave, so that, when he had gone out, she anxiously intoned these lines:

Poor silly heart,
You think a kiss is deathless;

Do you not see eclipse
Standing a little apart,
Breathless,
Finger to lips?

On returning to the Christian, Ali Shar found that he had come into the vestibule by the open door; the world darkened before his eyes and he cried: "What are you doing there, dog and son of a dog? How did you dare enter the house without my leave?" "Excuse me, master," answered the Christian, "I was forced to cross the threshold, being worn out with walking and unable to stand upright. Besides, there is no great difference between the door and the vestibule. As soon as I have taken breath I will go away. Do not thrust me forth and Allah will not thrust you forth!" With that he took the jar from Ali Shar's hands, drank what he needed, and returned it to his host who remained standing until the unwelcome guest should choose to depart. But when an hour passed without the Christian offering to move, Ali Shar cried out in rage: "Will you begone now?" "Master," said the Christian, "I see that you are not one of those who delight in doing a good deed to one who will remember it all his life; not one of those whom the poet mourned when he wrote:

Gone are the givers
Whose hands were rivers,
Refreshed like rivers before you could think;
Now the world is a miser
Who says: "You must buy, sir."
When a broken-down wayfarer asks for a drink.

I have quenched my thirst with the water of your

house, but hunger so tortures me at this moment that I would be very content with the scraps of your last meal, even if they turned out only to be a crust of dry bread and an onion." "Not another word!" cried Ali Shar, more furious than ever. "Begone! There is nothing left in the house!" Without moving, the other answered: "Pardon me, my lord, but if there is nothing left in the house, you still have the hundred dinars which you received for your carpet; I conjure you, in Allah's name, to buy me a simple cheese-cake at the nearest market, that it may not be said that I left your house without there being bread and salt between us."

"Without a doubt this evil Christian is extravagantly mad," thought Ali Shar. "I will throw him out of doors and set the dogs of the street upon him." As he was about to take hold of him, the Christian said: "I only want a single piece of bread and a single onion to appease my hunger; you must not go to any great expense for me, since the wise man is content with little. As the poet said:

A crust of dry bread is enough for the wise,
But a city's supplies
Of stuffed golden mutton
Cannot feed the desire of a glutton."

Ali Shar saw that he would have to comply; so, telling the Christian to wait where he was without moving, he left the house, locking the door after him and taking away the key in his pocket. At the market he bought cheese roast with honey, cucumbers, bananas, pastries and bread fresh from the oven, and carried them back to the Christian, saying: "Eat!" But this unpleasant guest excused himself, saying:

"What generosity, my lord! You have brought enough for ten persons; it is too much. Honour me by sharing my repast." "I am not hungry; eat alone," answered Ali Shar; but the Christian answered: "The wisdom of nations teaches us that he who refuses to eat with his guest is undoubtedly an ill-born bastard."

At this time, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-first Night
Had Come

She said:

When he heard this unanswerable remark, Ali Shar dared refuse no longer; so he sat down by the Christian's side and began to eat with him, letting his mind run the while upon other matters. The Christian profited by his host's inattention to peel a banana and, after splitting it, to slip between the two halves a dose of pure banj mixed with extract of opium, sufficient to send an elephant to sleep for a year. This banana he dipped in the white honey sauce of the excellent roast cheese and offered it to Ali Shar, saying: "For the truth of your faith, my lord, accept this succulent banana which I have prepared for you." Ali Shar, wishing to be done with the matter, took the fruit and swallowed it, but hardly had the mouthful reached his stomach when he fell back senseless. The Christian leaped to his feet like a flayed wolf and bounded into the street, where some men waited in hiding with a mule. Beside the animal stood old Rachid Al-Din, the lecher with blue and

bleary eyes whom Zumurrud had spurned and who had sworn to take her by force whatever happened. You must know that he was a base Christian, who only professed the faith of Islam to obtain equal privileges in the market with the other merchants; the Christian who had just drugged Ali Shar was the brother of Rachid and his name was Barsum.

Barsum hastened to inform his brother of the success of their plan and the two Christians, followed by the other men, entered Ali Shar's lodging and rushed into the chamber at the side, which the young man had hired as a harem for Zumurrud. In less time than it takes to tell they gagged the beautiful girl and, throwing her body across the mule, set off so swiftly that in a few minutes they reached old Rachid's house.

The blue and blear-eyed villain had Zumurrud carried into the most retired room and, when her gag had been removed, sat down beside her, saying: "You are now in my power, beautiful Zumurrud, and it will take more than a rascal like Ali Shar to get you back again. Before you lie down in my arms and prove my valiance in the fight of love, I require you to abjure your evil faith and become a Christian even as I am. By Christ and by the Virgin, if you do not at once accede to my double desire, I will torture you until you are more wretched than a sick dog!"

The girl's eyes filled with tears which fell down her cheeks; her lips trembled as she cried: "As Allah lives, O white-bearded monster, you may cut me in pieces before I renounce my Faith; you may take my body by force, as a rutting he-goat takes an unformed female, but my soul shall never partake of the impurity of yours. Allah will know how to reward you for your infamy!"

When the old man saw that his words would not persuade the girl, he called his slaves, saying: "Turn her over and hold her flat on her belly!" This was done; and the old Christian cruelly beat the round parts of her with a whip, so that each lash left a long red weal on the white of her behind. At each stroke, Zumurrud cried: "There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the prophet of Allah!"; although Rachid did not leave from beating her until he could raise his hand no more. At last he ordered his slaves to throw her into the kitchen with the other slaves and deprive her of all food and drink.

Ali Shar lay unconscious in the vestibule of his house until the following day. When the drunkenness of banj and the fumes of opium had dissipated from his brain, he sat up, crying: "O Zumurrud!" As no one answered him, he got to his feet and anxiously entered the other room, which he found silent and empty, with the veils and scarfings of Zumurrud scattered upon the floor. At this sight he remembered the Christian and, realising that his dearly loved Zumurrud had been carried away, threw himself upon the ground, beating his head and sobbing, tearing his garments and weeping all the tears of desolation. At the height of his despair he rushed from his house and, gathering up from the road two great stones, one in each hand, ran about the streets, beating his breast with them and crying: "O Zumurrud, Zumurrud!" A large crowd of children soon surrounded and followed him, yelling: "A madman! A madman!" while the people who knew him looked at him with compassion and wept for the loss of his reason, saying: "That is the son of Glory, poor Ali Shar!"

He wandered extravagantly in this sort, loudly beating his breast with stones, until he met an excel-

lent old woman, who said to him: "My child, may safety and sanity attend you! When did you become mad?" Ali Shar answered with these lines:

My sickness is love-lack;
O doctor, do not probe and ask,
But give her back,
Who is a silver salve in a gold flask.

Hearing these lines and looking closely at Ali Shar, the old woman understood that here was only a lover, suffering from the extremity of love, so she said to him: "My son, do not fear to tell me of your unhappiness, for perhaps Allah has placed me on your path to help you." Ali Shar told her his adventure with Barsum the Christian; and the good old woman, after reflecting for an hour with bent head, raised her eyes to him, saying: "Go as quickly as you can and buy me a pedlar's basket; then hurry to the market and fill it with bracelets of coloured glass, rings of silvered copper, ear-drops, and such trinkets as old women sell from door to door among the servants of great houses. I will put the basket on my head and visit all the homes of the city in turn; until I glean some news which will put us on the right track, and, if it pleases Allah, bring the lady Zumurrud back to us."

At this time, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

Ali Shar wept with joy, kissing the good old woman's hand, hastened to buy her what she needed. In the meanwhile his helper entered her own house to dress herself for her undertaking. She veiled her face with a brown honey-coloured veil, covered her head with a Kashmir shawl, and wrapped herself in a great veil of black silk. Then, balancing the basket upon her head, and sustaining her venerable years with a stick, she made a slow tour of the harems belonging to merchants and important persons in the different districts of the city; and came at last to the house of old Rachid Al-Din, the miserable Christian, whom may Allah confound and burn in the fires of His hell and torture until the end of time. Amen!

She came to the house just as the unfortunate girl had been thrown into the middle of the slaves and servants of the kitchen and lay half-dead upon a shabby mat, groaning from the blows which she had received.

The old woman knocked at the door and, when one of the slaves had opened to her and greeted her in a friendly manner, she said: "My child, I have some very pretty things to sell; is there anyone within who cares to buy?" "I think so," answered the slave, and at once introduced the new-comer into the kitchen and made her sit down, where she was immediately surrounded by all the servants. She made no difficulty about her prices and sold bracelets, rings, ear-drops, and other trinkets so cheaply that she soon won the

hearts and confidences of all, by this, and by the unctuous sweetness of her address.

Looking round, she saw Zumurrud lying upon her mat and learned from the slaves all that they knew about her presence there. Being certain that this was the girl whom she sought, she went up to her, saying: "My child, Allah avert all evil from you; for He sends me to your rescue! You are Zumurrud, the well-loved slave of Ali Shar, son of Glory." Then she told her the reason of her own presence there, disguised as a pedlar, and added: "Tomorrow evening make ready to be rescued. Stay by the kitchen window, which looks out upon the road and, when you hear a whistle from someone hidden in the shadows, answer with another whistle and climb out fearlessly. Ali Shar will be there himself." Zumurrud kissed the hands of the old woman, who hastened to leave that house and tell Ali Shar all that had happened. "You must be under the kitchen window tomorrow evening and do such and such," she said.

Ali Shar thanked her for her good offices and would have made her a present; but she refused and went her own way, with many wishes for the success of the enterprise, leaving Ali Shar to murmur over verses dealing with the bitterness of separation.

On the following evening, Ali Shar took his way to the house which the excellent old woman had described to him and, when he found it, sat down in the shadow of the wall to wait for the hour agreed upon. But, as he had passed two nights without sleep, it was not long before slumber overcame him and he knew no more. Glory be to Him who sleeps not!

On that same night, Fate had decreed that a certain expert and audacious robber should have come to

examine the house in the hope of being able to break into it. During his tour of inspection he came to the place where Ali Shar slept and, being tempted by the richness of his clothes, dexterously stole from him his beautiful turban and his mantle. The thief had hardly muffled himself in his spoil when he heard someone open the window and whistle; looking up he saw a woman beckoning to him. Without understanding what this might mean, the robber answered her whistle and, at once Zumurrud climbed out of the window into the street by means of a cord. The robber, who was a rascal of considerable strength, received her upon his back and made off with the speed of light.

When Zumurrud felt herself carried with so much strength, she was astonished and said: "Dear Ali Shar, the old woman told me that you could hardly walk, being so weakened by your grief and fear; but you are stronger than a horse." The thief's only answer was to gallop more quickly, so Zumurrud passed her hand over his face and, finding it spiked with hair harder than a hammam broom, so that one might have thought that here was a pig which had half-swallowed a fowl, was seized with terror and hit the face with her fists, crying: "Who are you? What are you?" As, by this time, they were in the open country, far from all houses, surrounded by night and solitude, the thief halted and lifted the girl to the ground, crying: "I am Jawan, the Kurd; the stoutest and wickedest of all Ahmad Al-Danaf's band. There are forty of us brave fellows and we have been without pleasant company for a very long time; but tomorrow night will be the most blessed of your life. We will make you a member of our band. You will be honoured with the attentions of forty gallant men.

Zumurrud understood the full horror of her situation and, beating her face, wept for the mistake which had thrown her into the hands of the forty. Then, realising that evil destiny was for the moment ascendant in her life and that it was useless to contend with it, she let herself be carried on again by her ravisher and contented herself with sighing: "There is no God but Allah! In Him I put my trust! Each of us carries his fate about his neck and it may not be removed!"

At this time, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

The terrible Kurd, Jawan, ran on until he came to a cave hidden among the rocks, which was the headquarters of the forty thieves and their captain.

Jawan's mother, an old woman who kept house and cooked for the robbers, hearing his signal, came out of the cave to greet her son. The Kurd handed Zumurrud over to the dame, saying: "Take good care of this gazelle until I come back; for I am going to fetch the rest of the band that they may know her with me. We cannot be here before tomorrow at midday as there are certain thefts arranged for tonight, so feed the girl well, that she may be able to support our love-making."

When he had gone, the old woman came up to Zumurrud with a bowl of water, saying: "My child, what a happiness for you to be desired by forty young

and lusty men, to say nothing of the captain who, in his own person is more solid than all of them! As Allah lives you are fortunate to be young and desirable!'' Zumurrud wrapping her head in her veil, lay sleepless upon the ground until the morning.

The night brought both reflection and courage, so that at dawn she said to herself: ''Surely it is wicked to do nothing in such a pass! Must I patiently wait for these forty lusty thieves to come and beat me and treat me like dust under their dirty feet? No, by Allah, I will save my soul and body at the same time!'' With this determination, she rose and going to the old woman, kissed her hand, and said: ''Good mother, the night has well rested me and I now feel very ready to honour my guests. What shall we do to pass the hours of waiting? Would you like to come out with me into the sunlight and let me comb your hair and search for lice in it?'' ''As Allah lives, that is an excellent idea!'' said the old woman: ''Since I have been in this cave I have not been able to wash my head, so that it now serves as a guest house for every kind of louse ever known upon men or animals. At night they come out and march in armies over my body: there are white ones and black ones, big ones and little ones, and even one with a very long tail which walks backwards, also some of them smell worse than old farts. If you will rid me of these unpleasant beasts, I promise to treat you very well while you remain with us.'' She went out of the cave with Zumurrud and, squatting down in the sunlight, took off her head covering. Then the girl was able to see that indeed the old dame harboured every known variety of louse and even some that were hitherto unknown. Plucking up her courage, she lifted them

and threw them away by handfuls, combing the hairs to the roots with sturdy thorns; then, when only a normal quantity of lice remained, she sought for them with her agile fingers and popped them between her nails in the ordinary way. After this, she soothed and smoothed the hair so slowly and pleasantly that the old woman was charmed into a profound sleep.

Without losing a moment, Zumurrud ran to the cavern and, dressing herself in men's clothes which she found there, covered her head with a costly stolen turban. Then she saddled and bridled a stolen horse, which was grazing near by with hobbled legs, and, mounting astride, set off at full gallop, with a prayer to the Master of all rescues.

She rode without a halt till nightfall; and started again on the following morning at dawn, not pausing throughout the second day except to eat a few roots which she plucked up from the ground, and to let her horse graze. She went on this way for ten days and nights.

On the morning of the eleventh day she left the desert which she had been crossing and entered a grass country of surpassing green, where fair waters ran and the eye was rejoiced with great trees, with shadows and with roses and flowers which the eternal spring of that place brought out in multitudes. The birds of creation fluttered there, herds of gazelles passed through it, and the most graceful of Allah's beasts dwelt there.

Zumurrud rested for an hour in this delightful place and then, remounting her horse, continued along a beautiful road between fresh thickets, which led to a great city whose minarets shone far off under the sunlight.

When she was near the walls and gate of this city, she became aware of a great crowd which uttered delirious cries of joy and triumph as she approached. The gates opened; and emirs, nobles, and captains rode out to meet her. When they reached her, they bowed and kissed the earth before her with such marks of submission as people render to their king; while, from the intoxicated crowd on every hand, rose this mighty cry: "Allah give victory to our sultan! O king of the earth, may your coming bring benediction to the people of the Faith! Allah make strong your reign, O our king!" At the same time thousands of warriors on horseback made a double hedge to keep the crowd back, and a herald, riding upon a richly harnessed camel, proclaimed to the people, in a loud voice, the happy arrival of their king.

The disguised Zumurrud could find no meaning in all this, so she asked the chiefs of the city, who were leading her horse by the bridle: "Great lords, what is happening in your city and what do you wish with me?" By way of answer, the grand-chamberlain came forward and, bowing to the ground, said: "O master, the Giver of all things has been in no wise niggardly in sending you to us. Praise be to Him! He has led you by the hand to place you upon the throne of this kingdom; and I thank Him that He has chosen so young and fair a king, a child of a noble Turkish family, a sultan with a shining face. I thank Him, I say, for if he had sent us some beggar or unimportant person, yet we would still have had to accept him as our king and render homage to him. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

"For you must know that it is our custom, in this city, to come out upon this road if our king dies without male issue, and wait for the arrival of the first comer whom Destiny sends us, that we make him our new king and salute him as such. Today it has been our good fortune to meet you, O most beautiful of all the kings of the earth, O unique in our time and all times!"

Zumurrud, who had a head on her shoulders and was fertile in plans, did not allow her face to betray any confusion at this strange news, but said to the grand-chamberlain and the other worthies: "O faithful subjects of mine, do not think for a moment that I am a Turk of obscure birth or a son of the common people; learn rather that I come of a noble Turkish family and have left my native land in search of adventures, after having quarrelled with the people of my house. As Destiny has presented me with such a chance of experiencing some new thing, I consent to mount your throne." With that she put herself at the head of the procession and entered the city in triumph, cheered to the echo by all her new subjects. When she halted her horse before the door of the main palace, the emirs and chamberlains dismounted and, holding her under the arms, lifted her down and carried her into the great reception hall; when they had clad her in royal garments, they set her upon the gold throne of the old kings and fell down before her, kissing the earth between her hands and reciting the oath of submission.

Zumurrud began her reign by opening the royal

treasures, which had accumulated throughout the ages, and distributing large sums to the soldiers and to the poor, so that the people loved her and prayed that she might long reign over them. Also she gave great quantities of robes of honour to the officers of the palace and distributed her favours among the emirs and chamberlains and among their wives and among all the women of the harem. She abolished taxes, imposts, and town dues, freed the prisoners in the gaol, and redressed all abuses. In this way she drew to her the love of both great and small, who, also thinking that she was a man, marvelled at her chastity when they learned that she never went into the harem or lay with any of her women. As a matter of fact, she chose for night duty only two delightful little eunuchs, who had to sleep across her door.

Far from being happy, however, Zumurrud never left off thinking of Ali Shar, whom all the enquiries which she made in secret failed to find. She wept, prayed, and fasted in order to bring down the blessing of Allah upon her lover and obtain that she might some day find him again; and stayed thus for a whole year, so that all the women of the palace lifted their arms in despair, crying: "O misfortune, that our king is so devout and continent!"

At the end of a year Zumurrud had an idea which she wanted at once to put into execution; she called her wazirs and chamberlains and gave orders that the architects and engineers of her kingdom should smooth out a vast enclosure, a parasang long by a parasang broad, and build in the middle of it a magnificent domed pavilion, richly carpeted and having in it a throne and seats for the chiefs of the kingdom. These orders were executed in a very short time: the space was traced out, the pavilion built, and the seats

disposed in hierarchic order. Then Zumurrud called together all the nobles of the city and the palace, and gave them a feast which might not be paralleled in the memory of the oldest of her subjects. When they had well eaten and drunken, she turned to her guests, saying: "During my reign I will call you all together in this pavilion at the beginning of each month and you will take your places upon your seats, while every man in my kingdom eats and drinks before you in one party and gives thanks to the Giver of all things. Heralds shall call my people to their feast and warn anyone who refuses to come that he will be hanged."

At the beginning of the next month, heralds went throughout the streets of the city, crying: "O buyers and sellers, rich and poor, hungry and full, the king your master summons you to his pavilion. There you shall eat and drink and give thanks to Allah. He who refuses shall be hanged. Shut your shops and come! Cease from buying and come! He who refuses shall be hanged!"

The crowd ran eagerly at this invitation and poured into the pavilion in close waves, to find the king sitting upon his throne and all the great ones of the kingdom ranged in hierarchic order upon their seats about him. The crowd fell to on many excellent things: roast sheep, buttered rice, and especially that delightful dish, made with crushed corn and fermented milk, which is called *kisk*. While they ate the king carefully examined them one after the other and so attentively that each said to his neighbour: "As Allah lives, I do not know why the king is looking at me!" The nobles from their seats encouraged the people all the time, saying: "Eat without shame and take your fill, for you cannot please the king better than by showing

a good appetite." Also they said to each other: "As Allah lives, we have never in all our lives seen a king who so loved his people and so wished them well."

Now among the most greedy who ate with a fiery swiftness, making plate after plate of the excellent food disappear, the greediest of all was the miserable Christian, Barsum, who had drugged Ali Shar and stolen Zumurrud with the help of his old brother, Rachid Al-Din. When he had finished with the meat and with all things cooked in butter or fat, he noticed a dish, which was out of his reach, filled with an excellent rice-cream sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar; therefore he shouldered aside his neighbours and, reaching the plate, drew it towards him and taking an enormous handful from it, stuffed his mouth full.

At this time, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

One of those who were sitting near said, in a shocked voice: "Are you not ashamed to have so long an arm and to keep a great dish all to yourself? Do you not know that the code of true politeness teaches us only to eat what is put before us?" Another added: "May the stuff weigh upon your belly and upset your tripes! An amusing fellow, a great eater of hashish, said: "In Allah's name, let us share! Come here by me and I will take a mouthful or two." But Barsum looked at him disdainfully and said: "O wicked hashish-eater, these noble meats were not

intended for your jaws; they are for delicate fellows like myself." He was getting ready to plunge his hands into this delicious paste again when Zumurrud, who had been watching him for some time, recognised him and sent four of her guards to him with these instructions: "Take hold of that man who is eating rice-cream and bring him to me." The four threw themselves upon Barsum and, snatching from his fingers the mouthful which he was about to swallow, threw him face downwards upon the earth and dragged him towards the king. The other guests were so astonished, that they stopped eating and began to whisper among themselves: "See what comes of being greedy and taking the nourishment away from other people!" The hashish-eater said to those who were near him: "As Allah lives, it was a good thing that I could not persuade him to share that cinnamon rice with me! What punishment will he get, think you?" With that all the guests watched closely to see what would happen.

Zumurrud's eyes blazed with fury, but she concealed this and said to the man: "Tell me, fellow with bad blue eyes, what is your name, what your trade, and why have you come into our country?" The miserable Christian who wore a white turban, which is not lawful save for Mussulmans, made answer: "O king, my name is Ali, and I am a lace-maker by trade. I came into your country to carry on that trade and earn my bread with the work of my hands."

Zumurrud said to one of her little eunuchs: "Go quickly and fetch me my table of divining sand and geomantic copper pen." When this order had been executed, she spread the sand carefully over the surface of the table and with the copper pen traced the

appearance of an ape and certain lines in an unknown character. For some minutes she regarded these lines absorbedly, and then, suddenly lifting her head, cried out in so terrible a voice that it was heard by all the guests: "O dog, how do you dare to lie to kings? Are you not a Christian and is your name not Barsum? Did you not come to this country to search for a female slave, whom you had stolen? Dog and devil, you now shall confess the truth which has been revealed to me so clearly by my magic sand!"

The terrified Christian crawled along the ground towards the king with clasped hands, saying: "Mercy, mercy, O king of time! I will not deceive you! Allah preserve you from all evil! I am indeed an ignoble Christian and came here with the intention of raping away a Mussulman woman, whom I had stolen and who fled from our house."

Amid murmurs of admiration from all her people, who could not help crying: "Allah, Allah, never in all the world was there a geomancer, a sand reader, like our king!" Zumurrud called her executioner and his assistants, saying to them: "Take this miserable dog beyond the city, flay him alive and after stuffing his skin with rotten straw, return and nail it to the gate of the enclosure. Burn his body on a fire of dry dung and throw what is left into the drain." The executioner and his men at once took out the Christian and inflicted upon him this punishment, while all the people, who remained in the hall, said that the sentence was both just and wise.

Those who had been the neighbours of Barsum at table, exchanged their impressions of this happening. One of them said: "As Allah lives, I shall never again allow myself in all my life to be tempted by rice-cream, although I love it very much." The

hashish-eater, holding his belly for a colic of sheer fear, cried: "It was my good angel who kept me from that wicked rice!" and all swore that they would not pronounce the word rice-cream as long as they lived.

When the next month came and the people gathered together to feast before their king, a great space was left about the dish of rice-cream and no one would even look in its direction; yet all, to please the king, who was examining each of them one by one, ate, drank, and rejoiced exceedingly. It was noticeable, however that no one touched anything which was not directly before him.

During the course of the feast a man of terrifying appearance came quickly into the pavilion, thrusting aside all those who came in his way, and, seeing every place taken except one by the rice-cream dish, squatted down before that dish and, amid general consternation, stretched out his hand towards its contents.

At once Zumurrud recognized this fellow as Jawan, the terrible Kurd, one of the forty thieves, led by Ahmad Al-Danaf. He had come to that city to hunt for the girl whose flight had mightily enraged him, when he had come back with all his companions and was ready to forgive her. He had bitten the hand of despair and sworn to bring her back, though she were at the other side of Mount Caucasus or hidden somewhere like a pistachio in its shell. His search had led him at last to the city ruled over by Zumurrud and he had entered the pavilion with the others.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

He sat down before the dish of rice-cream and plunged his whole hand into the very middle of it. From all sides cries greeted this action: "What are you doing?" "Take care!" "You will be flayed alive!" "Do not touch that ill-omened dish!" But the man rolled frightful eyes about him, crying: "Be quiet! I will fill my belly with this rice-cream, for it is a thing I love." His neighbours cried again: "You will be flayed and hanged!" but, for all answer, he drew the dish nearer to him by the hand which was plunged in it, and leaned over the succulent confection. The hashish-eater, who sat nearest him, now quite cleared from the fumes of his drug, fled precipitately further off, as a sign that he had no lot or part in what was going to happen.

After Jawan the Kurd had plunged his hand, which was black as a crow's foot, into the dish, he brought it out as big and heavy as the foot of a camel. Rounding the great mass which he had lifted in his palm, he made a ball of it as large as a citron and threw it with one movement to the bottom of his throat, where it was swallowed with a noise like thunder, mingled with the sound of a torrent in a reverberating cave, so that the dome of the pavilion re-echoed again and again. The place where he had taken out his handful was so deep that the bottom of the mighty dish could be seen of all men.

The hashish-eater raised his arms, crying: "Allah protect us all, he has engulfed the whole dish in one mouthful! Thanks be to Allah who did not create

me in the form of rice-cream! Let the rest of us eat at our ease, for I see on that man's forehead the image of a flayed skin. . . . O horrible gulf, may your digestion turn on you and smother you!" The Kurd took no notice of what was said about him, but thrust his bludgeon-like fingers a second time into the tender mass, which opened with a dull quaking sound, and brought them back, holding a lump as big as a pumpkin. He was already turning this in his hands before swallowing it, when Zumurrud said to her guards: "Bring me that man before he swallows his mouthful." The men threw themselves upon Jawan, who did not see their approach, because he was bent over the dish, and, after turning him over and binding his hands in one dexterous movement, dragged him before the king, amid such remarks as: "It is his own fault; we advised him not to touch that terrible rice-cream."

"What is your name?" asked Zumurrud of the man. "What is your trade, and why have you come into our city?" "My name is Otman, and I am a gardener," answered the other. "I came into this city to look for work." "Bring me my sand table and copper pen!" cried Zumurrud. When these objects were set before her, she traced forms and figures in the sand and seemed to reflect and calculate for an hour, before she raised her head and said: "Woe betide you, miserable liar! My calculations tell me that your real name is Jawan the Kurd and that your real trade is theft and murder. O pig, O son of a thousand whores! Admit the truth at once if you do not want the stick to aid your memory!"

Jawan, who did not suspect for a minute that this king was the girl whom he had stolen, became suddenly yellow; his jaws chattered together and his lips

retracted from his teeth so that these appeared like the fangs of a wolf. Thinking that the truth would save his head, he said: "You are right, O king; but I repent before your face from this very moment and will walk in the straight way for ever after." But Zumurrud cried: "It is not lawful to allow an evil beast to live when it lies in the path of Mussulmans. . . .

"Take him out, and skin him alive; stuff his skin and nail it to the door of the pavilion and do with his body as you did to the body of the Christian."

When the hashish-eater saw the guards taking the man out, he rose and turned his behind to the dish of rice-cream, saying: "O rice-cream, O sugared and cinnamoned thing, I turn my back upon you! Unhappy confection, you are not worthy of my regard, scarcely of my bottom! I spit upon you and hate you!"

At this time, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

When the day came for the third feast, all happened as before: the king sat with his nobles and the common people began to eat, drink, and make merry, filling every part of the pavilion, save that immediately about the plate of rice-cream, to which every guest managed to turn his back. Suddenly there entered a man with a white beard, who, seeing a place by the great vacant dish, walked to it and sat down, in order

that he might not be hanged. Zumurrud looked at him and recognised Old Rachid Al-Din, the miserable Christian who had contrived her capture with his brother.

This is what had happened. After Rachid had waited for a month for the return of his brother whom he had sent to look for the escaped girl, he resolved to set out on the quest himself and, in course of time, fate had led him into the pavilion and into that seat in front of the rice-cream.

"As Allah lives," said Zumurrud to herself, "this rice-cream is an excellent dish, for it attracts all the malefactors I have ever known. I think I should make it the obligatory food of all my people and hang those who do not grow to love it. In the meantime I must deal with this senile wretch." So she cried to her guards: "Bring me the man at the rice!" and they brought him to her, dragging him along the ground by his beard. "What is your name, what is your trade, and why have you come into our city?" she asked; and the old man answered: "O auspicious king, my name is Rustum, and I have no trade save poverty, for I am a dervish." "The sand and the pen!" cried Zumurrud; and when these things were brought, she made marks and figures on the surface of the sand and pondered over them for an hour. Then she raised her head, saying: "O evil dog, you have lied to the king! Your name is Rachid Al-Din; your trade is the ravishing and prisoning of Mussulman women; outwardly you profess the faith of Islam, but within you are a miserable Christian, decayed with vices. Admit the truth, or your head shall drop before your feet even now!" Rachid confessed all his crimes and faults, thinking to save his head, but Zumurrud said to the guards: "Turn him over and

give him a thousand strokes on the sole of each foot!" When this had been done, she continued: "Take him out, skin him, stuff his hide with rotten hay, and nail it with the two others at the entrance of the pavilion. Then let his body go to join those of the other two dogs."

While this sentence was being carried out, the rest of the guests settled down to eat again, marvelling at the wisdom and justice of their king.

When the feast was finished, Zumurrud went back to her palace; but she was not happy. "Thanks be to Allah who has brought my heart the relief of vengeance!" she said to herself. "But this does not bring me back my Ali Shar. Yet the Highest is also the All-Powerful; if He wills, He can do this and more also for those who adore Him." Stirred to the depths by memories of her lover, she shed abundant tears all through that night and then shut herself in with her grief until the beginning of the following month.

As soon as the king and his nobles had taken their place for the fourth feast and all the people were eating and drinking, Zumurrud made this prayer within her soul: "O You, who gave back Joseph to his old father and cured the terrible sores of holy Job, of Your great goodness return my lover Ali Shar to me! O Master of the universe, who turns the strayed creature back into the right and pleasant way and benevolently hears the voices which rise towards Him night and day, send Ali Shar to your poor slave!" Hardly had Zumurrud murmured this prayer to herself when a young man came into the enclosure, bending his slim waist as he walked, just as the branch of a willow bends before the wind. He was as beautiful as the light is beautiful, but seemed pale and weary. Finding no other seat vacant, he sat down by the plate

of rice-cream, while horrified glances followed his every movement.

Zumurrud recognised him at the first glance, and with difficulty strangled a cry of joy upon her lips. As she did not wish to betray herself before her people, she waited for the agitation of her bowels and the clamour of her heart to still themselves before she dared to send for Ali Shar.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

Now, you must know that Ali Shar had wakened at daybreak, when the merchants began to open their shops. Surprised at first to find himself lying in that street, he carried his hand to his forehead and thus discovered that his turban was missing. When he saw that his mantle was also gone, he began to understand the truth of the matter and ran sorrowfully to tell his misadventure to the old woman, whom he begged to return to the house and ask for news. When she came back to him at the end of an hour, her face was altered with grief, her hair was undone, for she had heard of the disappearance of Zumurrud. "My child," she said, "I think you must now give up all hopes of ever finding your mistress. In grief there is no power or might save with Allah. All that has happened to you is your own fault."

Ali Shar saw the light change to darkness before his eyes, he wished for death, and fell weeping and

sobbing into the arms of the good old woman, where he fainted. Thanks to her attentions, he recovered consciousness but had to go to bed at once. He lay there stricken by an illness which deprived him of all sleep and would have led him straight to the doors of the tomb had not his venerable friend tended him, loved him, and encouraged him. For a whole year he lay thus, and the old woman did not leave him for a moment. She gave him syrups, and chicken broth to strengthen him, and fortifying perfumes to smell; while he, in his languor and weakness, let her do what she would, and said over a thousand poems of separation. This was one of them:

This fever and this fever
Wears down the eyes with water,
Wears out the heart with fire,
And cuts the red thread shorter
With the hot sword of desire;
While the spirit breaks
Because it wakes
For ever and for ever.

Ali Shar stayed without hope of cure because he was without hope of finding Zumurrud; so that at last the old woman, not knowing how to lift him from the stupor which held him, said: "My child, you will never find your love by lying here; rise up now, and be strong. Make pilgrimage throughout all cities and all lands; for no one knows the road by which comes safety." She kept on speaking to him in this way, goading him and encouraging him, until at last he was persuaded to rise, to go to the hammam where she bathed him herself, to drink sherberts, and eat chickens which she prepared for him. After a month

of this treatment he was strong enough to travel; he said farewell to the old woman, and began his journey. Thus it was that he ended in the city where Zumurrud was king, seated before the dish of rice-cream powdered with sugar and cinnamon.

As he was hungry, he raised his sleeves to the elbows and, after repeating the preparatory formula, began to eat. His neighbours, sorrowful to see what they took to be his danger, advised him not to touch the contents of the dish, and as he persisted, the hashish-eater said: "Be careful! You will surely be flayed and hanged." "Death would be a blessed thing, a deliverer," answered Ali Shar; "also, I intend to eat this rice-cream." With that he stretched out his right hand and began to eat heartily of the pleasant food.

Zumurrud watched him, saying to herself: "I will let him eat his fill before I summon him." When she saw his lips moving in the grace: "Thanks be to Allah!" she said to her guards: "go to that young man who is sitting before the dish of rice-cream, and beg him, gently and politely, to come and speak with me." The guards went up to the youth and, bowing before him, said: "Master, our lord the king wishes to put a question to you." "I hear and I obey!" said Ali Shar, as he rose and moved towards the king. Seeing this, the guests hazarded a thousand conjectures. Some said: "Woe, woe, upon his youth! Who knows what will happen?" Others said: "If ill were intended, the king would not have let him eat his fill; he would have stopped him at the second mouthful." And yet others said: "The guards have not dragged him along by his feet; they have gone with him, following at a respectful distance!"

Ali Shar kissed the earth between the king's hands,

while Zumurrud said in a gentle and trembling voice: "What is your name, O gentle youth, what is your trade, and what has brought you into our city?" "O auspicious king," answered the other, "I am called Ali Shar, son of Glory. My father was a merchant in the land of Khorasan. My trade was the same as his; but calamity long since made me leave it. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-twenty-ninth Night
Had Come

She said:

Ali Shar continued: "I came into this land to look for a dearly loved woman whom I have lost; she is sweeter to me than light and hearing and my own soul. Since she was taken from me, I have walked like one in an evil sleep. Such is my lamentable tale." With that he burst into tears and was rocked by such a storm of sobs that he fell down in a swoon.

Zumurrud ordered her two little eunuchs to sprinkle his face with rose-water; and on smelling the rose-water he came to himself. Then said Zumurrud: "Bring me my sand table and my copper pen!" She traced figures and hieroglyphics, over which she brooded for an hour before she raised her head and said in a sweet voice, but one loud enough to be heard by all the guests: "O Ali Shar, son of Glory, the sand confirms your story, you have spoken the truth. I predict that Allah will soon bring your lover back to

you. Therefore be of good cheer!" Proclaiming the feast at an end she ordered the little slaves to conduct Ali Shar to the hammam and, after providing him with a robe of honour from the royal cupboards and a steed from the royal stables to bring him back to her at nightfall.

The people, having seen these things and heard these orders, said to each other: "What secret reason can the king have for treating this young man with so much honour and consideration?" "As Allah lives," returned those more knowing than the rest, "the boy is beautiful; what other reason do you want?" But yet others of them said: "We knew exactly what would happen directly we saw the king allow him to finish his meal of rice-cream. By Allah, we did not know that rice-cream could cause so powerful and so different results." With that the guests trooped away, still buzzing with opinions and aphorisms.

Zumurrud waited with indescribable impatience for nightfall, when she might be alone again with the dear one of her heart. Hardly had the sun disappeared and the muezzin begun to call the folk to prayer when she undressed and lay down upon her couch, clothed only in a silk chemise. She lowered the curtains that she might be in shadow and ordered the two little eunuchs to introduce Ali Shar.

In the meanwhile the chamberlains and officers of the palace, seeing Ali Shar treated in this unusual way, said to each other: "It seems certain that the king has fallen in love with this young man. Tomorrow, after they have passed a night together, he will surely be appointed grand-chamberlain, or perhaps general of the army." So much for them.

When Ali Shar was led in, he kissed the earth

between the king's hands and, after offering up prayers for his safety, waited to be questioned. "I will not reveal myself to him all at once," thought Zumurrud to herself, "for, if he recognised me suddenly, he might die of emotion." So she turned to him and said: "Gentle youth, come a little nearer to me. Have you been to the hammam?" "Yes, my lord," he answered; and she continued: "Were you washed, and perfumed, and refreshed all over?" "Yes, my lord," answered Ali Shar; and Zumurrud went on: "Did not the bath give you an appetite? See here is a dish of chicken and pastries to your hand. I pray you eat a little." When Ali Shar had eaten and was content: "Now you must be thirsty," said Zumurrud; "see, here are drinks. Allay your thirst, and then come nearer to me still." Ali Shar drank a glass from each jar of wine and somewhat timidly approached the couch.

The king took him by the hand, saying: "You please me very much, O youth; your face is beautiful, and I love beautiful faces. I pray you, bend down and rub my feet." Ali Shar rolled up his sleeves and, stooping, began to rub the feet of the king, who after a few moments said to him: "Now rub my legs, and my thighs."

While Ali Shar rubbed the legs and the thighs of the king, he was astonished to find them unbelievably tender and white; so he said to himself: "As Allah lives, kings' thighs are not like those of other men! They are quite white and hairless."

"Sweet youth," said Zumurrud, "your hands are most expert in the art of rubbing. Go up a little higher now, towards my navel." Ali Shar stopped suddenly in his work and said, in a frightened voice: "Excuse me, my lord, but I do not know how to rub

higher than the thighs. I have now finished all that I know."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come

She said:

At this answer, Zumurrud assumed an angry voice, and cried: "Do you dare to disobey me? As Allah lives, if you hesitate any longer, this night shall be a fatal one to your head! Bend down, now, and obey my desire. In return, I will make you my lover of lovers, and appoint you my emir or emirs, my captain of captains." "But, O king, I do not understand exactly what you wish," said Ali Shar; "what must I do to obey you?" "Thus and thus," answered the king and Ali Shar understood. But, instead of obeying, he exclaimed loudly: "That is a thing which I have never done before in all my life. If you force me to it, I will hold you accountable on the Day of Resurrection. Let me go out of here and leave the country." But Zumurrud answered in a yet more furious voice: "I order you to remove your nether garments and do as I have commanded; otherwise I will have your head cut off at once. Resistance is useless, youth, and it is silly. Obey me and you will not repent it."

Ali Shar was forced, against his will, to obey this harsh edict. He reluctantly divested himself of his inexpressibles and, with a plea to Allah for deliverance, assumed the attitude contemptible. "Now," thought Ali Shar, "I shall surely be destroyed." Zumurrud

smothered her laughter as best she might and decided she would prolong the joke before revealing herself to her master. "Now," she said, in a most serious fashion, "there is, as you perhaps do not know, a certain ritual in these matters which it were meet to perform, especially when one is, as I judge you to be, a tyro. Firstly, I must subject you to the test of the cold," saying which, she suddenly touched Ali Shar upon his flesh with a seal ring of finest jade, than which there is no colder stone. Poor Ali Shar, fearful and trembling in his limbs, jumped mightily at this. "Now," continued Zumurrud, "we shall perform the rite of fire." With that she again touched Ali Shar with her ring of jade and he, being most thoroughly frightened, thought that he had indeed been burnt. He leapt from the couch with a fearful cry and stood, facing the king, who now laughed with uncontrollable mirth.

"Noble king," he began, "no doubt this is to you a merry jest, this freezing and burning of a man's flesh before you utterly destroy him. But I would have you know that I will have none of your merriment, nor the other either. If I disobey you I shall lose my head, but if I disobey the promptings of Allah within my heart, I may lose much greater spiritual treasures. Therefore, O king, know that Ali Shar, son of the merchant Glory, refuses to do this thing you bid, even at the cost of his head." When Zumurrud heard these words of courage and nobility, she felt ashamed that she had treated Ali Shar as she had done. She answered him softly: Your words have not been chosen for their etiquette, nor for the favours they would gain you. Mind alone has not been the source of your sayings, for you spoke from the

heart." "O king of time," answered Ali Shar, "I ask only that I may be permitted to leave your country and to continue my search."

This was the moment for which Zumurrud had been waiting. She burst out laughing heartily and, standing up, facing Ali Shar, she said: "Do you not recognise your slave, dear master?" And when Ali Shar, who understood nothing of all this, asked: "What slave and what master, O king of time?" she answered: "O Ali Shar. I am Zumurrud; do you not know me?"

Ali Shar looked closely at the king and recognized his well-beloved. He took her in his arms and embraced her with transports of joy which are more easily imagined than told to you. Then Zumurrud told him of all her adventures since she had been stolen from his house by the miserable Christian, Barsum. Ali Shar marvelled mightily at her strange tale and the destiny which had placed his slave upon the throne of a king. When they had talked until their throats were more dry than the sands of the desert, Zumurrud said, with a delicious inflection: "It is said, dear Ali Shar, that resistance may, under certain circumstances, become a vice." Ali Shar understood and crushed her lips against his own.

The circumstances was unusual and the little eunuchs, not knowing the proper course to adopt in such matters, stood, irresolute and unnoticed, peering through the opened curtain. Finally the bass snores of Ali Shar and the tremolo pipings of Zumurrud played the duet of sleep and the little eunuchs realized that there was no need for giving an alarm.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-first Night
Had Come

She said:

Seeing these things, the two little eunuchs stole silently away, saying: "Our king's behaviour is hardly that of a man; he is more like a woman and a mad one at that." But they kept the secret carefully to themselves.

When morning came, Zumurrud dressed herself again in her royal robes and called together, into the courtyard of her palace, all her emirs, chamberlains, captains, wazirs, counsellors and nobles. To these she said: "O faithful subjects, today I permit you to go out into the road where you first met me and find some other man to be your king. For I have resolved to abdicate my throne and depart with this youth into his own country; I have chosen him to be the friend of my life and, as I have given him all my love, would give him all my days also. The peace of Allah be with you!"

The court answered with hearing and obedience, and the slaves rivalled each other in preparing for the journey, filling chest after chest with food, riches, jewels, robes, gold and silver, and loading them upon the backs of mules and camels. When all was in readiness, Zumurrud and Ali Shar got up into a velvet and brocaded palanquin, carried by a dromedary, and, accompanied only by the two little eunuchs, journeyed to the land of Khorasan, and came at last to their city and their own house. Ali Shar gave great alms to the poor, the widow, and the orphan; and distributed rich presents among his friends and neighbours. The two lived for many years amid a large gift of sons from Allah; their joy was never diminished until the

visit of the Destroyer, the Separator. Glory be to Allah, who lives untroubled throughout eternity!

But, continued Shahrazade to King Shahryar, do not think for a moment that this story can be compared with the tale of the Six Different Coloured Girls. If the poems in that are not more admirable than any you have already heard, you may cut off my head as soon as you like.

And Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF THE SIX DIFFERENT COLOURED GIRLS

It is related, O auspicious King, that the Commander of the Faithful, Al-Mamun, sat one day upon the throne in his palace, surrounded not only by his wazirs, emirs, and nobles, but by all the poets and pleasant wits with whom he was intimate. His greatest friend among them all was Muhamad of Bassora. It was to this man that the khalifat turned, saying: "O Muhamad, I wish you to tell me some tale which has never been heard here before." "That is easy, Prince of Believers," answered the other. "Would you like a story which I have heard, or a tale of things which I myself have seen?" "I wish the most marvellous; it does not matter of which kind," said Al-Mamun; and straightway Muhamad of Bassora spoke as follows:

O Commander of the Faithful, lately I have become acquainted with a rich man, a native of Al-Yaman, who left his own country and came to live in our city of Baghdad, in order to eat the fruits of joy and calm. This Ali of Al-Yaman, finding the conditions of life in Baghdad very much to his taste, ended by transferring all his belongings from Al-Yaman, including his harem

of six young slaves, each more beautiful than any moon.

The first was white, the second brown, the third fat, the fourth thin, the fifth blonde, and the sixth black; but all were perfect in beauty, in the knowledge of literature, in the art of dancing and playing upon instruments of music.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come

She said:

The white girl was called Moonlight; the brown, Incense-Flame; the fat, Full-Moon; the thin, Girl-of-Paradise; the blonde, Sunlight; the black, Dark-of-the Eye.

Now one day, when Ali of Al-Yaman felt in better spirits than usual owing to the delectable peace which he experienced in our city, he invited his six slaves to come together to keep him company; to drink, to talk, and sing with him. The six came and the hours passed pleasantly in every kind of game and joyful amusement.

As they were all laughing together, Ali took a cup, filled it with wine, and turned towards Moonlight, saying: "O sweet white slave, O Moonlight, let us hear the delicate harmony of your perfect voice." Moonlight, the white slave, took a lute and, after drawing from it a low prelude which would have charmed the very stones to rise up and dance, made this song and sang it to her own accompaniment:

With burning dyes
Love has painted my beloved upon my eyes
And stained the picture of my beloved upon my breasts
Beneath my saffron vests;
Therefore, should he depart,
I turn into a heart;
And, when he is by,
I change into an eye.

The master of Moonlight was moved with pleasure at this song and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down. He filled the cup a second time and, holding it in his hand, turned to the brown slave, saying: "O Incense-Flame, O remedy of souls, let me hear the accents of your voice; sing something that you love." Incense-Flame took the lute and, after playing a melody which would have charmed all hearts to dancing, sang this:

My true love has a face of rose and vair;
He teaches beauty to the beautiful girl.
God's fingers patted, smoothed, and curled
To give the poor distracted dutiful girl
A coloured snare,
The swiftest, brightest snare in all the world.

The master of Incense-Flame was moved with pleasure at this song and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down. He filled the cup again and, holding it in his hand, turned to the fat slave, saying: "O Full-Moon, O heavy girl whose blood runs light and sweet, sing us some song with lines as fair and clear as is your flesh." The fat girl took the lute and, after playing a prelude which would have charmed the hardest rocks to dancing, and

humming over a few notes to herself, sang in a voice of wonderful purity:

I'd lose the world for a smile
If I could beguile you.
The kings of the earth might walk
If I heard you talking.
The kings of the earth might talk
If I saw you walking.
I'd lie all life at your feet
If I could intreat you.
I'd lose the world for a kiss. . . .
If I could dismiss you.

The master of Full-Moon was filled with pleasure at this song and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down. He filled the cup again and, holding it in his hand, turned to the thin slave, saying: "O slim Girl-of-Paradise, it is now your turn to pluck ecstasy from the lute by the singing of your voice." The thin slave bent over the instrument, as a mother over her babe, and sang:

He cares as little as I love much;
There should be a court to decide on such,
A judge to fine me all my passion
And give it the prisoner for my offence
And then, in regular legal fashion,
Award the plaintiff indifference.

The master of Girl-of-Paradise was moved with pleasure at this song and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down. He filled the cup again and, holding it in his hand, turned to the blonde slave, saying: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-third Night
Had Come

She said:

O Sunlight, O body of amber and gold, will you embroider us some verses upon the delicate silk of love?'' The blonde girl bent her golden head over the sounding lute, half-shut her dawn-clear eyes, played a chaplet of melodious notes which charmed the body and soul alike to dancing, and sang:

His eyes shot a black arrow with black art,
Then I said to my heart:
''Poor heart, you suffer from a poisoned wound,
Where shall a cure be found?''
Yet if heart answered me I could not hear,
Because heart was not there,
Being still dragged behind love in the dust
On the bright string of lust.

The master of Sunlight was moved with pleasure at this song; and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down. He filled the cup again and, holding it in his hand, turned to the black slave, saying: ''O Dark-of-the-Eye, O black without but very white within, whose body is the colour of grief, but whose face shines with all joy, pluck us some flowers of music as rosy as the sun.''

Dark-of-the-Eye took the lute and, after playing upon it in twenty different ways, returned to her first melody and sang this, which was her favourite song:

Mourn over love's gold fire
Because my lover is pleasant to other women;
But do not tell me to cease from adoring roses.

What shall a heart do,
Which is stirred by roses?

Here are twenty cups full of wine
And an old guitar for kisses,
But I have no myrrh.

My roses burn in the gold fire,
But there are others
And it is always spring in paradise.

Pray God, it is not a crime
To love so popular a creature.

The master of Dark-of-the-Eye was moved with pleasure at this song and, after moistening his lips at the cup, offered it to the girl, who drank it down.

After this all six rose together and kissed the earth between their master's hands, begging him to let them know which charmed him most with voice and verse. Ali of Al-Yaman was perplexed at this request; after looking at them long, admiring their different graces and calling to mind their songs, he found them all equally admirable and therefore said:

"Glory be to Allah, the Giver of all beauty, who has allowed me six perfect women to be my solace! I swear that I love you all equally and can find in my soul no point on which to give the palm to any one of you. Come, my lambs, embrace me all together!"

The six girls fell into his arms and caressed him in a thousand ways for an hour together.

Then Ali made them stand in a circle before him and said to them: "I myself was unwilling to choose a favourite from among you, for it would have been unjust to do so; but you may make the choice yourselves. All of you are deeply read in the Koran and other fair writings; you have studied the annals of old and the histories of our fathers in the Faith; you all are eloquent. Now I wish each one of you to give herself the praises which she thinks that she deserves, pointing out the qualities of her beauty and deprecating the delights of her rivals. We will have the struggle between pairs; for instance, between the white and the black, the thin and the fat, the blonde and the brown; but the weapons must only be beautiful words, well-chosen maxims, citations from the wise, the authority of poets, and the warrant of the Koran."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come

She said:

The six girls consented to the test. The white slave, Moonlight, rose and signing to Dark-of-the-Eye to stand before her, said:

"O black girl, the books of the wise tell us that Whiteness spoke in this fashion: 'I am the shining light. I am the moon rising above the rim of the world. My tint may be seen of men and my forehead burns with silver. Thus said a poet of me:

God breathed into a foam of pearl
And fashioned the beginnings of this girl,

After, He mingled myrtle with the dew
And took white roses, too;
But in the end He had to add to these
All His bright gardens, all His wavering trees.'

Listen, black girl!

My colour is the colour of day, of orange-flowers, and the pearl star of morning.

Allah said to Moses (upon whom be prayer and peace!) when his hand was covered with leprosy: 'Put your hand in your pocket and you will bring it forth white and pure and whole.'

Also it is written in the Book of our faith: 'Those who keep their faces white and stainless shall be chosen by the mercy of Allah.'

My colour is the queen of colours; my beauty is my perfection, and my perfection is my beauty.

Rich garments and shining jewels consort best with my colour and show up my bright tint to confound the soul.

The snow which falls from heaven is always white.

The Believers have chosen white muslin to be the stuff of their turbans.

Many excellent and convincing things might be said about my colour; but the truth of them is evident, like a lamp shining before the eyes, and therefore I will praise myself no more. Rather I will speak a little in your dispraise, O black girl, ink-coloured, smoke-coloured, forge filings, crow-face!

Speaking of black and white, a poet has said:

They buy a pearl with captive kings,
But sell a bag of charcoal for a shilling;
Heaven is white faces and white wings,
Else it would not be heaven. I am willing,

If you would have me tell
The whole truth, to admit
And so be done with it,
They use the colour black a lot in hell.

The annals of the just tell us that Noah, the holy man, was sleeping one day with his two sons, Sam and Ham, beside him. A breeze lifted his robe and exposed his hidden members; therefore Ham laughed, for Noah, the second father of men, was rich in rigid glories; but Sam rose without a smile and hastened to replace his father's robe. Noah woke up and, after cursing the laughing face of Ham, blessed the serious face of Sam. Immediately Sam's face became white and Ham's black; and afterwards from the loins of Sam sprung the prophets, the shepherds of the people, sages and kings; whereas Ham, fleeing from the presence of his father, founded the line of negroes, men of Soudan. And you know well, O black girl, that not only the wise, but also common men, agree that there can come no sage or lawgiver among the blacks!"

"You may stop now," said Ali, "for it is the black one's turn." Then Dark-of-the-Eye, who had been standing motionless, fixed her eyes upon Moonlight, and said:

"O ignorant white girl, do you not know that, in the Koran, Allah swears by the dark night and by the shining day, and that, in His oath, He gives preference to the night over the day by naming it first?

Black hairs and black hair are the sign and ornament of youth, while white is a symbol of age and the end of enjoyment."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come

She said:

"If black were not the best of all colours, Allah would not have made it so dear to the eye and heart. Well advised was the poet who said:

A black body is filled with fire
And black flesh tingles with desire,
Black flesh is young.
Dear heaven, I beg
I never have to live on white-of-egg:
To love on white-of-egg were more
Distasteful. . . . I should scream aloud.
It was upon my tongue
To say I do not love a dead white shroud
Or those white hairs which are the stage before.

Another said:

You frown because I've lost my wits again
For a black girl? Allow me to explain:
The doctors always shake their heads and say
Black thoughts can drive the sanest man insane.

Another poet wrote:

I never love at noon,
I hate girls sickly white
Like rotten flour:
They are not worth an hour.
Black sweet, were there no night,
How could there be a moon?

Are not the intimate meetings of friends at night? Do not lovers owe much gratitude to the shadows which cover up their love and hide them from the indiscretion of the scandalous light? Do they not hate the inquisition of the compromising day? That should be enough proof for you, O white girl. But listen again to the poet:

I love not blank white boys who live on fat,
A slim black youth is worth a score of these.
What then?
Are you surprised at that?
I ride a quick black stallion, if you please,
And leave white elephants to older men.

And another poet has this:

Black night brings kisses
And white dawn brings shame.
If I'd a choice of blisses,
I'd thank God for the same
And pray that all these tedious days of white
Were changed to darkness, deep and exquisite.

O white girl, if I continued to number the praises of black, I would offend against the maxim: 'Brevity is the soul of argument.' Therefore I will only point out how pale your charms seem in comparison with mine. You are white just as a leper is white and stinking. If you compare yourself with snow, do not forget that in hell there is snow to torture the damned, with cold more terrible than any fire. If you compare me with ink, remember that the Book of Allah was written with black ink and that black musk is the present of kings. Recall these words of the poet for your instruction:

Black musk is best
But rotten pears are white;
And, for the rest,
Black girls are my delight.
Take low for lack of high
If you've a mind. . . .
But one sees with the black of the eye
And the white is blind."

When Dark-of-the-Eye had made an end of these words, Ali of Al-Yaman cried out: "O black and white, you have excellently well spoken! Now it is the turn of two others."

While the black and white regained their places, the fat and the thin rose and stood facing each other.

Full-Moon, the fat one, elected to speak first; but before she did so she undressed, showing her wrists and ankles, her arms and thighs, the magnificent folds of her rich belly, her round, deep-shadowed navel, and the opulence of her bottom. These treasures were veiled, but not hidden, by the light tissue of her chemise. After a few lascivious shivers, she turned to her rival, the slim Girl-of-Paradise, and said:

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come

She said:

"Praise be to Allah who, truth to tell, covered each corner and hill and dell with soft delightful cushions' swell; who stuffed my skin with fats which smell like

benzoin and hydromel, and gave me sturdy muscles as well.

Thin girl, the wise have said: 'The joy of life is in three things: to eat flesh, to increase flesh, and to put flesh on flesh.'

Who can see gigantic curves of the body without a tremble of delight? Allah himself praises fat in the Book, when He orders the sacrifice of fat sheep, fat lambs, and fat calves.

My body is an orchard of fruits: my breasts are pomegranates, my cheeks are peaches, and my bottom is water-melons.

What bird was most regretted by the children of Israel on their flight out of Egypt? Was it not the fat and juicy quail?

Have you ever seen anyone stop at the butcher's and ask for scraggy meat? Does not the man keep his fattest and fleshiest morsels for his best customers?

A poet wrote of a fat woman like myself:

Look at her walking,
She sways and heaves
More lusty and more lustful than the littles
Look at her resting
She sits and leaves
A deeper, sweeter imprint than the brittles.
Look at her dancing,
Her bottom weaves
A spell and knocks our souls about like skittles.

Is there anything which you resemble so much as a plucked sparrow? Your legs are like the feet of a crow, your thighs like pokers, and your body is as hard and angled as a gallows-tree. A poet said:

God grant I never have to love a thin one
And bruise my self upon her stony way,
Even if I found a little pleasure in one
I would be black and blue at dawn of day.''

''Now you may stop!'' cried Ali of Al-Yaman. ''It is the turn of Girl-of-Paradise.'' The slim child looked smiling at fat Full-Moon, and said:

''Praise be to Allah, who made my body the swaying branch of a poplar and added thereto the wavering of the cypress, the balancing of the lily!

I rise lightly and I sit down lightly; because of my lightness I can jest with charm. My breath is perfumed because my soul is pure.

I have never heard a lover praise his beloved, saying: 'She is as enormous as an elephant; she is as fleshy as the hills are high.'

Rather I have ever heard lovers saying when they would paint their mistress: 'Her waist is supple and slim; she walks so lightly that the dust may not tell of her passage; light food suffices her and a few bright drops of water; her cheeks and her caresses are discreet; there is the perfection of light lust in her embraces. She is quicker than a sparrow, more lively than a starling, she bends like a bamboo; her smile is light. She is a feather to lift and delicately bends above me; she lies like a scarf of silk upon my knees.'

O fat girl, it is the slim and fine, such as I, who burn the hearts of men, sending them mad with passion. I am the vine climbing a palm-tree, surrounding the stem with effortless kisses. I am the gazelle with moist eyes; nor am I called Girl-of-Paradise for nothing.''

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come

She said:

"Now, O fat girl, I will tell you the truth about yourself.

O mass of grease and flesh, when you walk, you are a duck; when you eat, you are an elephant. You are insatiable in caressing and unreasonable in repose.

Your belly and your two thighs are three mountains so huge and lofty that no one could hope to scale these eminences.

You are like a bouncing ball, a sphere, on which no thing can find a resting place.

You would never be sold by your qualities, but simply by weight to an evil butcher.

Your soul is as gross as your body; your jokes as heavy as the two put together. Your swagging cheeks destroy the beholder, your laughter fractures the ear-bone.

If your lover sighs in your arms, you can hardly breathe; if he embraces you, you become one glue of sweat.

You snore asleep, and breathe like a buffalo awake; you can hardly move from one place to another, and when you rest you are a burden even to yourself. You pass your life in chewing like a cow and urging like a camel.

You are so monstrous that you cannot see where your feet are walking and tread in uncleanliness. If you go to the bath, you cannot reach a quarter of

your hulk, so you remain half washed, unclean. In all things you are a careless slattern, an evil creature of a sloven.

She is as swollen as a water skin,
She walks about, and there an earthquake is.
She coughs among the nations of the West
And in the quiet East we hear the din."

Said Ali of Al-Yaman: "Great is your eloquence, O Girl-of-Paradise, and admirable your language, O Full-Moon. Now go back to your places and let the blonde and the brown speak."

Sunlight and Incense-Flame rose and stood facing each other. A smile parted the red lips and revealed the pearl like teeth of the blonde girl. She shook the ripples of her hair like ripe wheat and she said:

"I am that light colour spoken of at so great length in the Koran. Allah praised me when He said: 'Yellow is the colour which rejoices the eyes'; therefore I am the fairest of all colours.

My colour is a marvel, my beauty, the limit of beauty, and my charm, the end of charm. I give the gold its value and their beauty to the stars and sun.

I paint apples and peaches and give its delight to saffron. I colour many a precious stone and tint the ripe corn.

Autumn owes to me the gold of all her jewellery, nor would earth be fair under the carpet of her leaves had I not dyed them with the sun.

O brown girl, when your colour is found in anything, the value of that thing is lessened. Nothing is more common and ugly than your dye. Buffaloes, asses, wolves, and dogs, all are brown.

Tell me a single kind of meat in which we rejoice to see your colour. Neither flowers nor gems are brown; but copper is brown when it has not been cleaned.

Yet you are neither white nor black; so that you cannot take to yourself any of the praises which have been given to either of these colours."

Then said her master: "Now let Incense-Flame speak."

The brown girl showed the double string of pearls of her smile; and, as she had, beside her dark honey colour, the advantage of a harmonious body, a curving waist, an excellent proportion of limb, and coal-black hair falling in heavy waves down to her dimpled croup, she allowed these things to be seen for a silent moment before she said to her rival:

"Praise be to Allah that he did not make me deformed by fatness, or thin by illness, or white like plaster, or yellow like colic, or black like powdered charcoal; but rather mixed in me, with surpassing art, delicate colours and distracting lines!

All the poets have sung my praises in every tongue; I am the preferred of every age and every sage.

I have no need to praise myself, but am content to cite a few of the verses written in my favour."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

But When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come

She said:

"One poet wrote:
Brown girls, all other kinds of girl above,
Have love's own secret. This if you would prove,

Lie with a brown girl for an hour or so.
She'd teach the dead in heaven how to love.

Another said:

Brown, swift, and slim, it is not every one
Has loved a brown swift girl as I have done,
A little girl, a little brown, slim girl,
A branch of tender aloes in the sun.

Brown is the colour of my dreams.

O yellow girl, you are faded like cheap mallow-leaves, hard and fibrous, plucked about the Bab Al-Luk; you are coloured like the sheepshead-seller's gravy in an earthen pot.

You are coloured like the ochre and orpiment used for depilation at the baths; coloured like quitch.

Your copper face is like the fruit of the tree Zakum, which grows in hell and bears the heads of devils.

It was of you the poet said:

God gave a yellow woman for my wife,
And a continuous headache all my life.
Once I suggested that we ought to part;
I have no teeth to eat with since that strife."

When Ali of Al-Yaman heard these words, he shook with pleasure and laughed so, that he fell over on his back; he bade the two girls rejoin the others and, to prove to all six the joy he had had in their discourses, gave them equal presents of fair robes and jewels of the land and sea!

Such, O Prince of Believers, continued Muhamad of Bassora to the khalifat Al-Mamun, is the tale of the

six girls, who now live together in concord at the house of their master, Ali of Al-Yaman, in our city of Baghdad.

The khalifat was delighted with this story, and asked: "Do you know the house of the master of these girls? Can you go and ask him if he will sell them?" "As far as I know, O Commander of the Faithful," answered Muhamad, "he will never consent to be parted from them, because he loves them dearly." Then said Al-Mamun: "Take with you ten thousand dinars as the price of each; that will be sixty thousand dinars: and give them to this Ali of Al-Yaman, saying that I wish to buy his slaves."

Muhamad of Bassora took the money and hastened to find Ali, to whom he transmitted the wish of the khalifat. The poor man did not dare to refuse; so, taking the sixty thousand dinars, he handed over the six slaves to Muhamad, who led them at once to Al-Mamun.

The khalifat was enchanted at the variety of their colours, the elegance of their manners, their wit and charm. To each he gave a special place in his harem and for many days took pleasure in their varied perfections.

During this time Ali of Al-Yaman felt his solitude weigh heavily upon him and bitterly regretted that he had consented to the demands of the khalifat. One day he came to the end of his patience and therefore sent a letter to the Commander of the Faithful, which was filled with his despair and, among other sad phrases, contained these lines:

My spirit flies and clings
On sad moth wings
To those six tender ones.

They were my eyes, my food,
My garden solitude,
My drink, my life, at once.

I should have closed my eyes
Upon that gentle prize
And let my eyelids hold the six of them. . . .
Remains the oil, desire,
Remains the needful fire,
But there's no light, lacking the wicks of them.

When the khalifat Al-Mamun, who was great-souled, read this letter, he hastily called the six girls and, giving each of them ten thousand dinars, with marvellous robes and other gifts of price, sent them back to their master.

Ali of Al-Yaman saw them come to him, more beautiful than ever, richer and happier than they had been; so he rejoiced exceedingly and continued to live with them in all delight and pleasure until the day of final separation.

But, continued Shahrazade, do not believe, O auspicious King, that all these tales which you have heard up to the present are in any way to be compared with The Extraordinary Tale of the City of Brass, which I will tell you tomorrow night if you wish it.

Little Doniazade cried: "O Shahrazade, it would be most sweet of you to tell us just the first words of it tonight."

So Shahrazade smiled and said:

It is related, O auspicious King, that there was once a king—but Allah is the only King—in the city of . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.